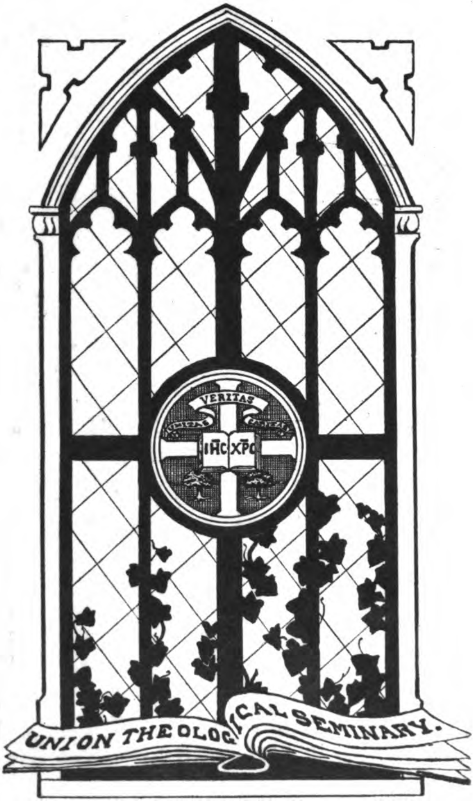
Divine faith

Peter Finlay


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DIVINE FAITH

BY THE SAME AUTHOR.

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LONGMANS, GREEN, AND CO.,
NEW YORK, LONDON, BOMBAY, CALCUTTA, AND MADRAS.

DIVINE FAITH

BY

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NEW YORK

LONGMANS, GREEN AND CO.

FOURTH AVENUE AND 30TH STREET

1917

Nihil obstat:

GULIELMUS HENRY, S.J.

Imprimi potest:

T. V. NOLAN, S.J.,
Præp. Prov. Hib.

Imprimatur:

GULIELMUS, *Archiep. Dublin,*
Hiberniæ Primas.

DEDICATED

TO

THE RIGHT HON. C. PALLES,

LATE LORD CHIEF BARON

OF THE EXCHEQUER IN IRELAND

THE following Lectures were delivered in the Dublin College of the National University of Ireland. They are published as delivered. Some repetition is inevitable at times in such Lectures. It is thought that the repetitions which occur here may not be without advantage to some readers; and they have, therefore, been allowed to remain.

MILLTOWN PARK,
November, 1917.

In references, other than those to Holy Scripture, the following abbreviations are used:—

Denz.: Denziger-Bannwart: Enchiridion Symbolorum; Friburgi, 1908.

M.G.: Migne, Patrologia, Seria Græca.

M.L.: Migne, Patrologia, Seria Latina.

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LECTURE I.

NATURE OF THE ACT OF DIVINE FAITH.

IN treating of "The Church of Christ: its Foundation and Constitution," we have had occasion repeatedly to make mention of "the Depositum Fidei," or "Deposit of Faith," which the Church has been Divinely commissioned to preserve and teach. God, from the beginning, has made revelations to mankind: sometimes directly and in person; at other times by Patriarchs and Prophets; "last of all, in these days," as St. Paul tells the Hebrews, "by His Son," and by the Holy Spirit, Whom the Son has sent. These revelations have been of the most varied kind. Some were concerned with historical facts like the creation, the deluge, the wars of Israel, the incidents of Christ's life. Others made known Divine counsels, commands, and prohibitions: such were the decalogue, the ritual prescriptions of the Jewish law, much of the teaching of Christ and of His Apostles. Others again dealt with the Divine nature and attributes, God's providence towards mankind, with sin, redemption, the means of grace, Christ's Church, our final destiny. And this whole body of revelation is spoken of as the "Deposit of Faith": a "Deposit," because it is entrusted to the Church's keeping; "of Faith," because its whole content, all the truths contained in it, are to be accepted and believed by the members of the Church. Indeed, it is often spoken of simply as "the Faith" itself, "the Christian Faith," "the Faith delivered to the saints,"

"the Faith of the Catholic Church": by which and similar phrases is meant the whole sum of doctrines which Catholics believe. Of Faith, in this sense of the word—"objective Faith," as it is sometimes called—I do not intend to treat at present.

But Faith bears other meanings, too. It may signify the state or habit of mind of one who has accepted and holds all the truths of revelation; it may signify the act itself by which the truths, any or all of them, are accepted and believed; it may indicate an abiding supernatural gift intended to assist believers in their acts of Faith. In all three meanings, as is plain, it is concerned directly with the mind of the believer; it is something within him, not without him; it is subjective not objective. And with two of these three meanings we shall make no attempt to deal in this present course of lectures. We shall limit ourselves to the act of Faith alone—the act by which we affirm the truth of the revelation proposed to us. The habit or state of mind, the abiding supernatural gift, are well worthy of consideration also; but they are not of so great practical importance; they are not so intimately concerned with our mental attitude in questions of religion; they are not so closely connected with our difficulties and temptations; they are not the object of so much controversy with adversaries of the Church of Christ.

For it is by an act of Faith that men embrace the true religion; by an act of Faith that they make profession of it; and it is commonly by an act of Faith that they reject the difficulties and doubts which are suggested against it. Nor is there any other question which has been more gravely controverted between Catholics and Protestants since the sixteenth century, and between Catholics and "Modernists" in our own day, than the nature and attributes of the act of Christian Faith. Pro-

testants, as we should expect, are not agreed amongst themselves as to what an act of Faith really is; but they are agreed in denying that it is an act of intellectual assent. "Protestants," says a well-known Protestant writer, "with one voice maintain that the faith which is connected with salvation is not a mere intellectual exercise."[1] He then goes on to quote with approval the Heidelberg Catechism: "It is not merely a certain knowledge whereby I receive as true all that God has revealed to us in His Word, but also a cordial trust which the Holy Ghost works in me by the Gospel, that not only to others, but to me also, the forgiveness of sin, and everlasting righteousness and life are given by God, out of pure grace, and only for the sake of the merits of Christ". And he sums up the Protestant view in the words: "What, therefore, the Scriptures mean by faith, in this connection, the faith which is required for salvation, is an act of the whole soul, of the understanding, of the heart, and of the will". As Protestantism developed, the intellectual element in Faith receded more and more into the background, until the Kantian philosophy declared that Faith was based, not on rational knowledge, but on the felt need of God; and was itself only an aggregate of emotions produced by intimate contact with the Divine Being. And the Kantian philosophy issued naturally in "Modernism". For in Modernism the foundation of religion is man's need of God; this need creates a sense of the Divine indwelling and operation; God's presence and operation is a Divine revelation; and the soul's efforts to correspond with the Divine workings, to reach up to God, as Christ did, is Christian Faith. As is plain, an act of Faith, in the Modernist theory, is an act of will.

[1] Hodge, "Systematic Theology," vol. iii. p. 90.

Now, Catholic teaching, on the contrary, represents Faith as an intellectual assent. We exercise our intelligence and judgment, we believe, when we elicit an act of Faith; we do not trust or hope or love. We are not concerned for the moment with the Protestant view, so intimately bound up with the theory that salvation is to be secured by Faith only; that the believer who has once truly laid hold on Christ and appropriated His merits is certain of salvation, because God has prepared for him efficacious means of perseverance. We limit ourselves to the inquiry: what is the nature of actual Faith, as set out for us in the Holy Scriptures, and in Catholic tradition? What is the act of Faith which God tells us is necessary, though it may not be, and by itself is not, sufficient, for salvation? Later, we shall discuss its motive and its subject matter, some of its attributes, such as its reasonableness, its certainty, its freedom, its necessity, and the process by which it may be led up to and justified. But these and kindred considerations depend so largely on the act itself that we must inquire into its exact nature first.

There can be no doubt that the Protestant theory which represents "Faith required for salvation" as "an act of the whole soul, of the understanding, of the heart, and of the will" is untenable and self-contradictory. Were it formulated otherwise, were it recast in the statement that the whole soul must share in the work of salvation, that understanding, heart, and will must contribute each its part, no objection could be made to its general accuracy. But there can be no such thing as an individual act of the human soul, which is at the same time an act of understanding, heart, and will. The understanding is not to be conceived of as identified with the will; neither will nor understanding is to be identified with the heart or the affections. The acts of

the body are not more separate and distinct than the acts of the soul; it is not more inaccurate to attribute one and the same indivisible act to the different senses of the body than to attribute one and the same act to different faculties of the soul. On this ground alone, then, the Protestant theory, as commonly presented to us, is impossible of acceptance: Faith is not a single complex act, compounded of belief and trust and love.

So, too, there can be no doubt that "Modernism," or Pragmatism, or whatever the system may be called, which makes Divine revelation a consciousness of Divine action in the soul, and Faith a resulting movement towards God, is equally unreasonable and impossible of acceptance. There is no place in such a system for an objective revelation; there can be no unity of Faith, no Divinely inspired Scriptures, no Christian Church: Christianity, as it has been held and lived during all these centuries, is only a delusion and an error. If it be true—as we have already seen it to be true—that God lived on earth and was a teacher to mankind, and established an infallible doctrinal authority in one visible society, then a system which involves as many differing revelations as there are souls with differing needs, and in which Faith may rightly become dissent, and the Faith of one be rightly contradicted by the Faith of another, is incredible and impossible.

What, then, we proceed to inquire, is actual Faith? The word faith is used in very various meanings. A man "keeps faith" with us, when he fulfils his promise. He acts "in good faith" when he lives according to his sense of duty. He "has faith in" us, when he bestows his trust and confidence upon us. His "faith in our statements" is unshaken, when he believes unhesitatingly what he has heard from us. And, as it is in the ordinary language of life, so, too, is it in the language of Holy

Scripture: "God is faithful," St. Paul tells the Corinthians;[1] and we ourselves are bidden to be "faithful servants".[2] "All that is not of faith is sin,"[3] St. Paul writes to the Romans; and our Lord Himself encourages us to "have faith in God".[4] Again, "Faith cometh by hearing";[5] and St. Paul counsels the Corinthians to "walk by faith not by sight";[6] and our Lord prays for St. Peter "that his faith fail not".[7] All these things, then, "faith," in the New Testament, may, and in varying contexts does, signify: fidelity, conscience, trust, belief; and all these things are necessary for salvation. But it by no means follows that "faith" involves them all, wherever it is met in Scripture: it is plain, indeed, from the nature of the case, and from the texts themselves, that it cannot do so. The meaning of the word must be determined in each separate passage, by the context and the subject matter.

We do not, therefore, contend that in Holy Scripture, more particularly in the writings of the New Testament, "faith" must always signify belief; but only that it may do so, and often does; and that the Faith, of which Scripture speaks as our voluntary acceptance of God's revelation, is an intellectual assent which may or may not be associated with obedience to the Divine law, with trust in the Divine mercies, and with certainty of salvation. Controversy on the subject is, indeed, largely verbal; for few of our opponents will deny that we can believe the truths of Faith by a mere act of intellect; and that we are bound so to believe them, even when we neither hope nor love; while we Catholics admit freely that such an intellectual assent is not "Saving Faith," in the Protestant sense; is not sufficient by itself, that is, to secure God's grace and friendship and life eternal.

[1] I Cor. i. 9. [2] Matt. xxv. 21. [3] xiv. 23. [4] Mark xi. 22.
[5] Rom. x. 17. [6] 2 Cor. v. 7. [7] Luke xxii. 32.

There is, however, a real ground of controversy in the question to which I have referred already: Is an act of Faith—Saving or otherwise—even possible, which shall be at the same time an act of intellect and an act of will, which shall be unhesitating belief and firm confidence and whole-hearted love? and in the further question: Can I believe, by an act of Divine Faith, that Christ's gracious merits have been applied to my individual soul, and that my salvation is consequently certain? The former question we have already briefly, but, for the moment, sufficiently discussed; the latter, we shall have occasion to deal with later.

At present, therefore, we may go on to examine the nature of an act of Faith, in so far as it is an acceptance of revealed doctrines, the foundation on which all Christian life is built. And for us Catholics the question has been authoritatively determined by solemn definitions of the Church. Already, at the time of the Council of Trent, when the Protestant theory was first put forward, we find the traditional Catholic doctrine expressly and clearly promulgated. In the sixth Session of the Council the Fathers teach: "Although we must believe that sin is not, and never has been, forgiven, unless gratuitously, through the Divine mercy, and for Christ's sake . . . yet it may not be maintained that those who are truly justified must hold as beyond all doubt that they are so justified, and that no one is freed from his sins and justified, unless he who believes for certain that he is so freed and justified, and that by such Faith alone is freedom from sin and justification to be accomplished. For as none should doubt God's mercy, or Christ's merits, or the efficacy and power of the Sacraments, so each one, considering his own frailty and indisposition, may be anxious and fearful as to his state of grace; since none can know with the certainty of Faith, which can never err, that

God's grace has been bestowed upon him."[1] And in the corresponding Canons, which sum up and anathematise the heresies which they condemn, the Fathers go on to declare: "If anyone shall say that justifying Faith is nothing other than trust in the Divine mercy, which pardons our sins for Christ's sake, or that it is by such trust alone we can be justified, let him be anathema". And again: "If anyone shall say that, to obtain forgiveness of sins, all men must believe certainly and unhesitatingly that their sins of weakness and indisposition have been forgiven them, let him be anathema". And further: "If anyone shall say that a man is freed from his sins and justified because he believes for certain that he is so freed and justified; or that none are truly justified, except such as believe themselves to be justified; and that by such Faith alone is freedom from sin and justification accomplished, let him be anathema". And finally: "If anyone shall profess to know with absolute and infallible certainty that he is sure to have the wondrous gift of final perseverance, unless this should have been made known to him by special revelation, let him be anathema".[2] It is plain, from these quotations, that the Council, while not expressly defining the intellectual character of the act of Faith, supposes it throughout, and is mainly intent on condemning the new heretical opinion that justifying Faith essentially includes an absolute certainty that Christ's merits have been applied to the soul, and an absolute assurance of final perseverance and salvation. In the next following General Council, more than three hundred years later, the subject was again dealt with, and from a somewhat different standpoint, as the condition of the time demanded. The philosophy of Kant had taken hold of Germany. A considerable

[1] "Decr. de Justif.," c. 9; Denz., n. 802.
[2] Denz., nn. 822-6.

school of Protestant theologians, some even among Catholics, inclined more and more to the view that Faith was primarily an exercise of the will and of the affections, that it was not dependent on any intellectual process, that it was not even justifiable on any intellectual grounds at all. And so the Council of the Vatican discusses very minutely this aspect of the question, and formulates decisions which bear very directly on our modern difficulties. In its third Session, in the Chapter on Faith, it sets out by declaring that, since man depends wholly upon God his Creator and Lord, and since created reason must be subject to Uncreated Truth, we are bound to worship God by Faith, when He makes a revelation to us. "And this Faith," it continues, "which is the beginning of man's salvation, the Catholic Church maintains to be a supernatural virtue, by which, through God's impelling and assisting grace, we believe those things to be true which He has revealed, and that, not because natural reason judges them to be so, on examining the truths themselves, but because of the authority of God, Who has revealed them—of God, Who can neither deceive us nor be deceived Himself."[1] And, somewhat further on, it speaks of the "assent of Faith," and of the "arguments for Faith," which, it says, "are suited to the intelligence of all," and it identifies Faith with "knowledge of the truth". An act of Faith, therefore, according to the Vatican, is an act by which we know truth, by which we assent to it, by which we believe it: clearly an intellectual act, not an act of the affections or of the will. And it confirms this teaching in chapter iv. and in the corresponding Canons, where it divides all knowledge into two kinds, one natural the other supernatural; declares this latter to be Faith; and compares and contrasts

[1] Denz., n. 1789.

them with each other. But, clearest and most emphatic of all is the Profession of Faith prescribed by Pope Pius X in 1910: "I hold as most certain, and I profess sincerely, that Faith is not a blind religious feeling, issuing forth from the secret places of subconsciousness, . . . but a genuine assent of intellect to truth received outwardly through hearing; by which assent we believe those things to be true that God, a personal Being, our Creator and Lord, has spoken, borne witness to, and revealed, and all because of the authority of God, Who is supremely truthful".[1] And, so, when we bear in mind the teaching office of Christ's Church and the degree of authority which attaches to her teaching, we can have no doubt that the act of Divine Faith is a purely intellectual act, the act by which a human intelligence apprehends and assents to a revealed truth, because God Himself has revealed it.

And this Church teaching is based on the unequivocal testimony of Holy Scripture. I do not, of course, assert that the word "faith" bears this meaning always, in the Old and New Testament writings: we have already remarked the contrary. But it does bear it often; and so Scripture proves conclusively that there is an act of intellect, which is rightly called Faith, in and by which we believe, and without which salvation is unattainable. Thus, after the promise of the Eucharist, described in the sixth chapter of St. John, when our Lord had upbraided the Disciples, for that "some of them believed not," and had inquired of the Apostles if they, too, would go from Him, St. Peter made answer for them, and protested, "Lord, to whom shall we go? . . . We have believed and have known that Thou art the Christ, the Son of God."[2] Their Faith in Christ is expressed by belief and knowledge. And Christ Himself, in His discourse with Nico-

[1] Act. Ap. Sedis, vol. ii. p. 670.

[2] John vi. 65.

demus: "Amen, amen, I say to thee that we speak what we know, and we testify what we have seen, and you receive not our testimony. If I have spoken to you earthly things, and you believe not, how will you believe if I shall speak to you heavenly things?"[1] And, again, in his conversation with Martha, on the death of Lazarus, after He had made known to her the doctrine of the resurrection, He asks: "Believest thou this? She saith to Him: Yea, Lord, I have believed that Thou art Christ the Son of the Living God, Who art come into this world."[2] Both question and answer are concerned with Faith in Christ's teaching; and Martha and our Lord Himself tell us plainly that to exercise Faith is to believe. Finally, to pass over countless other passages which might be quoted, we have in St. Paul's Epistle to the Hebrews a careful exposition of what Faith is, and of its bearing on salvation, together with a series of examples, in which it was admirably exercised. "Faith," he tells them, "is the substance of things to be hoped for, the evidence of things that are not seen." "And without Faith," he goes on, "it is impossible to please God. For he that cometh to God must believe that He is, and is a rewarder to them that serve Him. . . . Through Faith we understand that the world was framed by the word of God. . . ." By Faith Abel, Noah, Abraham, Jacob, and others of the Prophets did great things for God, and "all died according to Faith, not having received the promises, but beholding them afar off, and saluting them, and confessing that they are strangers and pilgrims on the earth".[3] There is no need, I think, to comment on the Apostle's words: he is writing about Divine Faith, its necessity and its efficacy; and he evidently regards it as an act of intellect, of knowledge,

[1] John iii. 11. [2] xi. 26. [3] Heb. xi. 1-13.

of belief. Nor, indeed, is it necessary to quote individual passages at all. The Scriptures as a whole are a Divinely inspired record, partly of facts, partly of doctrines; and a record is primarily intended for belief. It may have other and further purposes. It may be meant to awaken patriotism, or to advance party interests, or to explain and justify individual conduct. But its direct and immediate object is to obtain credence for the statements it contains. And, unless it obtain this, it can obtain very little else. Besides, Christ claimed expressly, in his public teaching, the character of a witness: "We speak what we do know," he says to Nicodemus, "and we testify what we have seen";[1] and again: "He that cometh from above is above all . . . and what He hath seen and heard that He testifieth";[2] and testimony is given to produce belief. The Apostles were ordained and sent as witnesses. "You are witnesses of all these things,"[3] Our Lord says to them, after He had risen from the dead; and again: "You shall receive the power of the Holy Ghost coming upon you, and you shall be witnesses unto Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the uttermost parts of the earth".[4] And their mission was appointed them in the impressive words: "Go ye into the whole world and preach the Gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptised shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be condemned."[5] They are to announce the "good tidings," to bear witness to its truth; and men are to believe the message which the Apostles bring to them; and so their chief office and duty, as they themselves explain it, is to testify, to give witness. Matthias is chosen, in the place of Judas, as St. Peter says, in order that "he

[1] John iii. 11. [2] v. 33. [3] Luke xxiv. 48.
[4] Acts i. 8. [5] Mark xvi. 15.

may be made a witness"[1] with the other Apostles. In his discourse at Pentecost, as later before the Council, St. Peter authenticates his teaching by the words: "Whereof all we are witnesses,"[2] and three thousand "receive His word and are baptised," and "believe," and so form the beginnings of the Christian Church. St. Paul declares to the ancients of the Church of Ephesus that "The ministry of the word which I received from the Lord Jesus is to testify the Gospel of the grace of God".[3] And St. John writes, in his first Epistle: "We have seen and do testify that the Father has sent His Son to be the Saviour of the world. And we have known and have believed the charity which God hath to us. . . . Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God abideth in him, and he in God."[4] And passage after passage might be quoted to the same effect. It seems clear, therefore, on the showing of the New Testament, that a main object of our Lord's coming was to awaken Faith in His own Divine personality and in the doctrines which He taught; that an essential object in the foundation of His Church and the sending forth of His Apostles was the continuance of His own Divine mission; that in this work both He and His Apostles were, before all things, witnesses; that men were bound to accept their testimony, and to believe their teaching; and that Faith must be, consequently, a submission of the intellect to Divine truth, or to the authority of a Divine teacher —that it must be, as Catholics maintain, an intellectual act.

And such has ever been the mind of Christ's Church. From the earliest age she has demanded, as she demands to-day, a profession of Faith from all who ask admittance

[1] Acts i. 22.
[2] ii. 32; v. 32.
[3] Acts xx. 24.
[4] 1 John iv. 14.

to her fold. She puts before them one of her Creeds or Symbols, sometimes in longer, sometimes in shorter form; and the candidate for Baptism must signify his belief in it. These same Creeds she uses everywhere in her solemn liturgical services, and in the persistent devotion of her children. And the Creeds are only brief statements of revealed facts and doctrines; and the recitation of a Creed signifies nothing more than assent to, or belief in, the statements which it contains: there is no question of trust, or hope, or love. More striking still, we have the evidence of the Martyrs, who testify, at times by formal declaration, and always by the shedding of their blood, to their belief in the doctrines of the Christian Church, and more particularly in the Divinity of Christ. They are, as their very name implies, "witnesses"—witnesses to the Faith; and their death is the supreme act by which they testify their adherence to it. Now we may not doubt that many of the martyrs were animated by an intense personal affection for Christ Our Lord, and supported by an unbounded trust in His power and love; but they were not condemned to death for their love and trust; they suffered and died for the doctrines which they believed. Read the confessions of Faith that have come down to us in the acts of the Martyrs, whether in earlier or in more recent times, and you shall find abundant evidence that, with rare exceptions, the Martyrs were charged solely with their religious opinions, were adjudged guilty of believing dogmas which their persecutors denied. And the Faith of the Martyrs is the Faith of the Universal Church. I shall not attempt to prove it in further detail. I should only detain you unnecessarily, if I were to accumulate proofs from ecclesiastical writers, from the early Church Fathers and the later Theologians, that the object of Faith is Divine revelation, that an act of Faith is an act by which we appre-

hend and affirm what is Divinely revealed; and that, like all acts of knowing, it is in our intellect, not in our will.

I would not, however, be understood to doubt that the will, too, has its part, and a very important part, in the mental process which issues in an act of Faith. Faith, as we shall see, is the outcome or result of a series of acts, which prepare for and lead up to it; and amongst these are acts of the will. Else an act of Faith could be neither free nor meritorious; no more free or meritorious than assent to a proposition in geometry or to a chemical formula. Nor could men be held responsible for their acceptance or their rejection of revealed truth; since none can be responsible where he can exercise no choice. But, while we admit the intervention of the will in what immediately precedes the act of Faith—an intervention which we shall discuss at length on another occasion—we do not admit that will is the faculty which elicits or produces the whole or any part of the act of Faith. Faith is in the understanding: to believe is to understand and to assent.

And, were it not for reasons of religious controversy, few, I think, would call in question the view that we Catholics maintain. According to general use, Faith is knowledge which rests upon authority. Human faith, in current events and in matters of past history, is only belief in statements made to us, which seems justified by the testimony of those who make them. No one suggests that human faith is to be attributed to the affections, or to the faculty of will. Why, then, should it be suggested, in the case of Divine Faith; which may differ only from the faith that is merely human in the Divine authority on which it rests, and in the supernatural assistance by which it is produced?

We may take it, then, as an accepted and authoritative

Catholic doctrine that intellect is the faculty by which we believe things Divinely revealed, and that Faith is the act by which we believe them.

But is it of any real importance, one may inquire, what view we hold on a question apparently so unpractical? Is it unpractical, we may ask, in reply? If so, it would not have been discussed so widely, and controverted so keenly, since the Protestant Reformation of the sixteenth century. It has been felt to be, and it is, of vital importance in our Catholic system. Our adversaries and ourselves are at one upon the point. And it is well we Catholics should not only hold, but also accurately understand, the Catholic position.

I purpose considering with you, in the course of these lectures, some of the chief among the attributes of an act of Divine Faith. We shall examine in some detail its subject matter and motive, its lack of evidence and its supreme certainty, our freedom in the act itself, and our obligation to believe, the process by which we arrive at and justify our Faith in Catholic doctrine as a whole, and in each of its particular dogmas; and other cognate questions. In these days, when our religion is so violently assailed, and when ignorance of its true teachings is so prevalent, it becomes the duty, as it should be the privilege, of educated Catholics to have a firm grasp of their religion intellectually, and on fitting occasions to act as its apologists. Now, there are few subjects more fundamental in our religion than the act of Faith—the act by which we embrace Catholic truth and profess it; and we begin our study of the act of Faith by determining the faculty of which it is an exercise. We admit, of course, and admit gladly, that there are multitudes who make acts of Faith—make them fervently and make them frequently, without being able to analyse the process. Nor have they any need to do so: they have no

difficulties of their own; they are not called on to give explanation or assistance to others. But education suggests difficulties; and contact with those in error gives frequent opportunity and call to aid them; and there is no such solvent of difficulties and remedy for errors as a clear and intimate knowledge of the truth. Further, it should be noted that the chief subjects of controversy in modern times are concerned with the act of Faith. It is only a very few who are fitted to deal with problems of the Higher Criticism, to form an opinion for themselves on the authenticity and historical value of the Old and New Testament writings. Not many can enter profitably into discussions on Transubstantiation, Episcopal Succession, the "Doctrine of Intention," and such-like matters; and, though we allow of no uncertainty about them, for they belong to "the Deposit," yet they do not lie very close to us; we are seldom called on to consider them. But we cannot escape discussion on the act of Faith, either with ourselves or with others: Are we reasonable in believing as we do? Are we really certain in our belief? On what does our assurance rest? Can I believe, if I so will? Or is Faith entirely a matter of evidence and argument, in which the intellect must inquire and decide according to the necessary laws of thought, and in which the inquirer bears no responsibility? We are called upon, almost daily, to answer these or similar questions.

Again, we have to make acts of Faith; some of them are necessary for salvation. It must be well to know exactly what the nature of such acts is, and what I must do, when I would elicit them. And, if you tell me that many a man speaks admirable English, who knows little about the principles of English grammar, I answer that it is not so, if he be an educated man; and that, in any event, he can only gain by acquiring the knowledge.

The more perfect our understanding of the act of Faith, the more likely is our act to be perfect.

Temptations, too, will come. It is hard to say which of the Christian virtues are more vehemently and more frequently assailed in modern society. It is enough to say that Christian Faith holds a prominent place among them. Our own thoughts, the events of life, conversation, books, periodicals—all give rise to temptation. And, to meet such temptation rightly, one must recognise it; must see its bearing upon Faith; must know what yielding to it means; and he can do none of these things unless he have a full and accurate understanding of the act of Faith itself.

LECTURE II.

DIVINE FAITH: ITS MOTIVE.

IN the previous lecture we discussed the nature of an act of Divine Faith; and we saw that it is essentially an intellectual act, an act of intellect alone. It is an assent, a judgment, a belief: neither wholly nor in part is it an exercise of the affections or of the will. The affections may, the will must, co-operate in the process from which the act of Faith results; but the act itself can proceed immediately from neither. And hence it contains no element of trust, no element of love. He who believes should, of course, trust and love also: the more real and vivid his Faith is, the more intense and unconditioned will his trust and love be. But the acts will be distinct and separate; he can produce no act of Faith, which shall be faith and trust and love combined.

We assume, then, from the last lecture, that an act of Faith is an act of intellect, an acceptance and affirmation of some truth proposed to us: and we now go on to inquire what the motive of the act must be. For we never can assent to truth without a motive or reason for assenting; and, if assent is reasonable, the reason or motive must satisfy us that the statement to which we assent is true. To assent is to affirm a statement or proposition to be true; to assent reasonably is to have a good and sufficient reason for so affirming it.

This reason is sometimes the truth itself. It is so clear and compelling, when presented to the mind and

rightly understood, that no room is left for doubt or hesitation. Such principles as "the whole is greater than any of its parts," the axioms of geometrical science, and similar statements, may be taken to be of this nature. Truths of this class are said to be "immediately evident". Then, there are other statements, which may be inferred from these—some, where the inference is certain beyond all possibility of questioning, others where the certainty is less, or where probability alone, in some one of its varying degrees, can be attained to. The propositions of Euclid may be taken as instances of the former, the theories of physical science of the latter class. Truths of this kind are said to be "mediately evident," "mediately true or probable". And in all these cases, our reasons for assenting to a truth are to be found in the truth itself—in it alone or in its connection with some other truth which is immediately evident. But there are truths of a different kind, to which we give assent for a reason wholly external to them: because of the testimony on which they come to us. Examine them as we will, we find nothing in them to compel assent, nothing certainly or even probably connected with truths which we admit as evident. And yet, if the testimony appear trustworthy, we accept the statements unhesitatingly. We are even prepared at times to stake our worldly interests, our whole happiness upon them. Of this kind are all the statements which go to make up history, and many of the views and opinions on which domestic and social life depends. I believe in the reality of past events, because reliable witnesses assure me of their occurrence. I believe in the reality of my kinship with other members of my family, in the affection of my friends, in the facts which the Press chronicles, for a similar reason. What I receive on the testimony of others, I am said to "believe": my assent to it is said to be an "act of faith"; while I am said to

"know" what I accept for reasons intrinsic to the truth itself; and my assent is said to be an "act of science" or "of knowledge". I do not say, of course, that these terms are used always with these precise meanings. I "know" that a European war is raging, though it is from the testimony of witnesses alone that my certainty is derived; I "believe" that my theory of technical or literary education is sound, though I may have worked it out for myself. But, in such contexts, the terms "faith" and "knowledge," "believe" and "know," are used loosely; as much of our ordinary language is, when we have no special reason to define it accurately. And, properly and strictly, and in contrast with each other, "faith" and "knowledge" bear the meanings we have just assigned them; and faith is assent to truth (real or apparent), not because of any reasons intrinsic to the truth itself, but because of external testimony, which bears witness to it.

And, hence, the division of faith into human and Divine. If the testimony on which our belief rests be human testimony, our faith is human; if the testimony be borne by God, our Faith is Divine. In neither case, however, do we limit testimony to mere verbal affirmation. A witness can give spoken or written evidence; he can testify by various other signs; occasion even may arise when silence is equivalent to verbal testimony. Nothing more is needed than what will pledge the authority of the witness for the truth of what is stated, and show that he intends to witness to it.

Now, that Divine Faith is such an act as I have described—an intellectual assent to revealed truths, on the ground that God Himself has revealed them; an acceptance and an assertion of their truth, on the ground that God Himself declares them to be true—is the explicit and declared teaching of the Church; as we shall now proceed to consider. I pass over other explanations or

definitions: that it is "the intuition of eternal verities"; "a persuasion of the truth stronger than opinion and weaker than knowledge"; "a voluntary conviction or persuasion of the truth"; "a conviction of the truth, which is based on feeling"; "a longing after God's free, merciful love, as His own Word declares it"; "a consciousness of reconciliation with God"; and many others: they are quite beside the truth, or they fall far short of it. That Faith, then, is an intellectual assent, we have already seen. That the motive, or sufficient reason, of the assent must be the Divine testimony it is not difficult to show:—

And, first, it is so expressly set forth by the Council of the Vatican, in a passage which we have already had occasion to refer to. In the "Dogmatic Constitution on Catholic Faith," the Council defines: "This Faith the Catholic Church professes to be a Supernatural Virtue, by which, with God's impelling and assisting grace, we believe those things to be true which He has revealed, not because of the truth which reason by its own natural light perceives in the things themselves, but because of the authority of God revealing them—of God, Who can neither deceive nor be deceived".[1] And, in the corresponding Canon: "If anyone shall say that Divine Faith is not to be distinguished from natural knowledge of God and morals, and therefore Divine Faith does not require that revealed truth shall be believed because of the authority of God revealing it: let him be anathema".[2] The doctrine of the Council, as is so often the case in authoritative Church teaching, is here put before us in a twofold form: first the Catholic dogma is positively affirmed, then error is condemned. In an act of Divine Faith we do not assent to revealed doctrines on

[1] Denz., n. 1789. [2] *Ibid.*, 1811.

the ground that we find in them sufficient warrant for our belief; but for a reason wholly different from and external to the doctrines themselves—the Divine authority or testimony, which vouches for their truth. The motive of Divine Faith is, therefore, the testimony of God. The believer, if asked why he believes any doctrine of the Faith, must be able to reply: because God has revealed it to me.

And the teaching of the Vatican is the perpetual tradition of the Church. Even in the Old Testament, the message of the Prophet is generally authenticated by the declaration: "Thus saith the Lord". Christ Himself, in His discourse with Nicodemus, after reproaching the Pharisee with his slowness to believe, continues: "Amen, Amen, I say to thee, that we speak what we know, and testify what we have seen, and you receive not our testimony".[1] And St. John writes of Faith in Christ the Son of God: "If we receive the testimony of men, the testimony of God is greater. . . . He that believeth in the Son of God hath the testimony of God in himself. . . . He that believeth not the Son, maketh God a liar: because he believeth not in the testimony which God hath testified of His Son."[2] And St. Paul reminds the Thessalonians "that, when you had received of us the word of the message of God, you received it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, Who also worketh in you that believe".[3] Indeed, the whole preaching of the Apostles, throughout the Acts and their Epistles, assumes what St. John and St. Paul expressly state in the passages I have just quoted: for the Apostles deliver their message as one entrusted to them; they do not recommend it for acceptance by human arguments; they do not ask it should be believed because of any

[1] John iii. 11. [2] 1 John v. 9. [3] 1 Thess. ii. 13.

authority they themselves possess; they present it as a message from God which God Himself attests, and which is to be submitted to and received, because He attests it. And it is in keeping with this characteristic of the Apostolic mind and work that St. Paul, in his Epistle to the Hebrews, when he would confirm his doctrine of Faith by a series of striking examples, selects those in which belief could rest on nothing other than the Divine testimony. "Through Faith," he says, "we understand that the world was framed by the word of God. . . . By Faith Abel offered to God a sacrifice exceeding that of Cain. . . . By Faith Noe . . . framed the Ark for the saving of his house. . . . By Faith he that is called Abraham obeying . . . went out, not knowing whither he went. . . . By Faith Abraham, when he was tried offered Isaac. . . . By Faith Moses . . . left Egypt, not fearing the anger of the King."[1] And, after a lengthened enumeration of like instances, he stops short, and exclaims: "And what shall I say yet? For the time would fail me to tell of Gedeon, Barac, Samson, Jephthe, David, Samuel, and the Prophets, who by Faith conquered kingdoms, wrought justice, . . . stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the violence of fire," and worked countless other wonders. Read that eleventh chapter of the Letter to the Hebrews, and you will see that St. Paul conceives of no other foundation for Divine Faith, whether in the Old or New Testament, than the testimony of God.

Hence, in the early Church, and at all times since, the argument of Christian apologists and teachers: you believe men; how much more ought you to believe God Himself? "If we do not believe God," says St. Ambrose, "whom shall we believe? . . . Do we look to the

[1] Heb. xi.

person of the witness? If good men were to make a statement, we should think it a crime to disbelieve. And it is God Who makes it, the Son of God Who corroborates it."[1] And St. Leo the Great sums up the mind of his own age, and of all ages of the Church's history, when he writes—"We believe, upon Divine authority".[2]

Indeed, it could not well be otherwise, so far as most of the great and vital truths of revelation are concerned. Some of them, no doubt, commend themselves to human reason. The existence of God, the unity of the Divine nature, many of the Divine attributes, some of the historical facts recounted in both Testaments, even the Divinity of Our Lord, may be sufficiently proved by rational argument. But there are others—the mysteries of our religion, the realities of the spiritual world, heaven and hell, supernatural grace, the Sacramental system, and many more—of which we can know nothing, can neither believe in nor understand them, unless through a Divine revelation, and on the Divine authority. It is not these latter truths alone, however, that we are called on to believe. We must assent to all whatsoever God reveals to us. And since our act of Faith remains essentially the same, whatsoever may be the truth revealed, its motive, too, must always be the same—the supreme authoritative testimony of God.

We hold, then, on these grounds, that the immediate motive or reason of our assent, in an act of Divine Faith, is and must be the Divine testimony. We, Catholics, do not and cannot believe in Divinely revealed truths, because we have received or discovered rational demonstration of them. We do not and cannot believe in them,

[1] Expos. Ev. Sec. Luc., Lib. iv. n. 71; M.L. xv. 1634.
[2] Serm. 7, de Nativ., c. 1; M.L. liv. 216.

because the Church teaches and guarantees them to us. We do not and cannot believe in them, because the whole Catholic community accepts them, and the clergy preach them, and parents and friends believe, and have ever taught us to believe, in them. No one of these reasons, not all of them combined, will enable us to make an act of Divine Faith—of that Faith of which Our Lord has said: "He that believeth and is baptised, the same shall be saved; he that believeth not shall be condemned".[1] The motive of such an act of Faith must be the testimony not of human reason, not even of the Catholic Church, still less of the Catholic Community, of priest, of parents, or of friends; it must be the testimony of God Himself. But is it not the case, you may feel disposed to say, that many of the Faithful, and not the less instructed only, believe in our religion and in its individual dogmas, because they have so learned from childhood, because the Catholic Church has always so taught, because Pope or Council has so defined? Do they, when they recite the Apostles' Creed, or make an act of Faith in our Lord's Eucharistic Presence, or give their assent to the doctrines of the Immaculate Conception and of Papal Infallibility, do they rest their belief on the Divine authority? Do they really formulate their assent—even though it be only in their own minds—in some such way as this: "I believe these truths, because God, the Infallible Truth, has revealed them to me?" And you may emphasise your difficulty by reminding me that, in intellectual assents, a motive cannot really be operative, cannot really take immediate part in producing the assent, except in so far as it is present to the mind and consciousness. Are the Faithful, then, of whom we speak, conscious to themselves, do they know and

[1] Mark xvi. 16.

feel, in the very act of assent, that their reason for believing is that God has revealed to them the truths which they believe? If not, they may indeed elicit an act of faith—of ecclesiastical faith, if the motive of their belief be the authority of the Church; of human faith, if their motive be the authority of their priest, their parents, or their friends; but it cannot be Divine Faith, of which the essential motive, Divine authority, is wanting to them. We cannot, of course, presume to determine what actually occurs in all cases in which Catholics assent to the doctrines of the Faith. We may feel assured that God will so direct and assist the Faithful generally that their acts shall be truly acts of Divine Faith. We must remember, further, that in our Catechisms, our prayer-books, in our liturgical services and religious instruction, wherever the act of Faith is expressed or explained, the required motive is accurately set forth. There must be very few Catholics, therefore, who do not know what is essential to an act of Faith. But the importance of the subject is so vital, and the danger of believing for human reasons so present, that religious teachers should unceasingly direct attention to the question, and we ourselves should keep it habitually in mind.

The motive of Divine Faith, then, is the Divine authority, the testimony of God: "I believe that 'the Word became flesh,' because God reveals it". We are to inquire now in what this authority, this testimony consists. And I shall pass over a discussion renewed frequently in former times, and of considerable interest to some thinkers of our own day: does the act itself of testifying enter into the motive of assent? When I believe a statement which you make to me, is your very making of it a partial cause of my belief, or is it only a condition precedent to and necessary for it? As a problem in psychology, it is more curious than useful; as bearing on the

motive of Divine Faith, it is of no importance whatsoever. And so the question we have to consider is: Assuming that God has borne testimony, what are the characteristics of that testimony, as proceeding from Him, which warrant and demand our full and most firm belief? The testimony of God may be conceived of as invested with authority because of His supreme dignity as Creator and Lord. The greater the majesty and power of a witness the weightier in a certain sense will be the evidence which he gives. But it will not be, on that account alone, any the more worthy of belief. We do not believe witnesses merely because they are of high rank or great wealth, or exercise a lordship over others. We believe them, because we are persuaded they know what they witness to, and speak truthfully what they know. Both qualifications are required, if testimony is to be held entirely reliable; and if these two be forthcoming all further qualification is unnecessary. Such is our experience, when we consider human testimony, in ordinary social intercourse or in our Courts of Law; and no reason can be suggested, no reason exists, why such should not also be the case when we consider the testimony of God. And hence the Council of the Vatican tells us, in words already quoted, that by Faith we believe revealed truths "because of the authority of God Who has revealed them, and Who can neither be deceived nor deceive". We are to believe, that is, whatever God reveals, and testifies to in revealing, because He is omniscient, and, therefore, cannot fail in knowledge, and because He is infinitely truthful, and cannot, consequently, deceive us. Testimony which is given by infinite wisdom or knowledge and infinite veracity or truth, can represent things only as they are: the assent which rests upon such testimony can have no more solid basis; and it can admit no possibility of doubt.

We believe, therefore, the mystery of the Holy Trinity, the Immaculate Conception of Our Lady, the Infallibility of the Pope, and all the doctrines of our Faith, because God, omniscient and infinitely truthful, has revealed them to us; the Divine authority, which gives its value to God's testimony, and on which, consequently, all Divine Faith rests, is constituted by the two Divine attributes of truthfulness and knowledge. We need them, in order to believe, and we need nothing more; they are the necessary and sufficient motives of Divine Faith.

But how, it may be asked, does this authoritative testimony of God come home to me? The "Deposit of Faith" was entrusted to the Church long centuries ago. God spoke then—Himself, by the Incarnate Word and by the Holy Ghost. And those who heard Him speak, or were convinced, beyond all reasonable doubt, that He had spoken, could receive His testimony and believe His statements, on His Divine authority. But that was nineteen hundred years ago. There has been no public revelation since. How, then, in these days does He speak to me? An obvious answer would be that an infallible Church is God's mouthpiece upon earth, the inspired means by which He makes His revelations known: when the Church speaks it is God Who speaks in and through her. But we are hindered from adopting such an answer by various considerations. Our Faith is not restricted to what the Church directly proposes for our belief: we must believe all that God reveals to us, whether the Church expressly teaches it or not: the duality of Nature in Our Lord and His oneness of Person were articles of Faith before the solemn definitions of Ephesus and Chalcedon. And, again, the Church at times infallibly proposes truths for our acceptance, which are not, and can never become, objects of Divine Faith. Her gift of Infallibility may be exercised beyond the bounds of that

Deposit which God has expressly revealed, and which alone we can believe on His authority. She is infallible in her judgments and teaching on matters so intimately connected with it that they must stand or fall, be accepted or rejected, together. She not only defines infallibly the Articles of our Faith ; she determines also infallibly the meaning of the sacred texts in which an Article is enshrined, the authenticity of the texts themselves, and the canonicity of the Books in which they are to be found. And, finally, Infallibility is not Inspiration. The infallible teaching of the Church is not necessarily the inspired Word of God. He guarantees its truth; but He can do so, and yet not speak it. And we can only believe as of Divine Faith, the Word of God, the statements which He makes, and to the truth of which, in making them, He pledges His authority. The voice of the Church, therefore, is not necessarily the voice of God; the testimony of the Church is not the testimony of God; God does not speak to me to-day, merely because His infallible Church speaks to me.

But is it necessary that God should speak to me to-day in order that I may believe, on His authority, the truths which He revealed many hundred years ago? Clearly, it is not. Else, all past history would become incredible. I admit events of the eighteenth century; I believe in facts and statements of the sixteenth, and of a thousand years before, not on the testimony of men who are now living, and witness to their truth, but on the authority of men and women long since dead, who bore testimony while they lived, whose authentic testimony has been safely transmitted to me, and of whose knowledge and truthfulness I feel certain. It matters little, therefore, where or when God made His revelation; it matters nothing how I come to know that He has made it. If only I can learn, beyond all reasonable doubt, that God

has spoken, then I can believe, and on His authority, the things He spoke. Nay, more, it is my duty to believe them if He spoke them for me: though this point we can treat more fully and more satisfactorily when we come to deal with the necessity of Faith. Nor is it required that God should have spoken directly and immediately Himself to the first generation of believers. Men testify in our Courts of Law as well by affidavit as by oral evidence; men speak to us in their letters, in their telegrams, by the messengers whom they send, and who repeat to us their message. And we believe them, not on the authority of the secretary who may have typed the letter, or of the clerk who may have forwarded the telegram, or of the messenger who brought the message, but on the authority of the sender himself, who inspired and dictated the letter, the telegram, or the message. Of course we must be satisfied that secretary, clerk, and messenger are competent, and have fulfilled their functions properly; but, given that assurance, we believe, even should they know and understand nothing whatsoever of the statements they communicate to us. While we may admit, therefore, that public or Catholic revelation—Divine revelation intended for mankind at large—ceased with the Apostolic times, that no new revelation has since been made, which can form any part of the Catholic Creed, and that private revelations are unlikely and of rare occurrence, we hold that we can, even now, believe the whole "Deposit of Faith," the whole body of revealed truths which God once spoke to men, and believe them on God's own authority. For we have evidence and arguments enough, as we shall see, to make it certain that He did speak them.

Is it, however, the fact that He Himself does not give testimony still to the truth of the Deposit? May it not be that, while no new public revelation is given to man-

kind, the revelation once given is continued? that God never ceases to testify to the truths He has once made known to us? We must remember that, as St. Paul writes to the Hebrews: "God at sundry times and in divers manners spoke in times past to the fathers".[1] And, in the same Epistle he tells them that "God bore witness" to the preaching of the Apostles "by signs and wonders and divers miracles, and distributions of the Holy Ghost, according to His own will".[2] And our Lord Himself distinctly appeals to His miracles as witnessing to the claims He had put forward: "Though you will not believe Me, believe the works".[3] Now, of course, it may be said that miracles are here referred to rather as proofs than as testimony; not as part of the Divine revelation which they accompany or follow, but as premises from which its truth may be inferred. It is in this sense that the Council of the Vatican speaks of them, when it teaches that "God willed certain external proofs of His revelation to be united with the interior assistance of the Holy Spirit—certain Divine facts, and primarily miracles and prophecies, which, because they point clearly to the omnipotence of God and to His infinite knowledge, are most sure signs of a Divine revelation".[4] And again, in one of its Canons: "If anyone shall say that no miracle can be wrought . . . or that the Divine origin of the Christian religion cannot properly be demonstrated by them, let him be anathema".[5] It is undoubted, therefore, indeed a doctrine of our Faith, that an argument may be based on miracles, which shall prove a revelation to be Divine. But may they not be something more than signs and proofs? May they not be a part of the Divine testimony, which witnesses that the things revealed are true? The

[1] Heb. i. 1. [2] ii. 4. [3] John x. 38.
[4] Denz., 1790. [5] *Ibid.*, 1813.

Vatican Council itself seems to imply as much when, in speaking of the Church, it declares that, "by her marvellous growth, her wondrous holiness, her inexhaustible fruitfulness in every form of good, by her Catholic unity and unconquerable stability, she herself is a great and abiding motive for believing in her, and a conclusive testimony to her Divine mission".[1] The very existence of the Church, that is, and her preternatural attributes, the miracle which she is herself, is God's witness to her Divine origin: God testifies by the miracle which He unceasingly works. As we have already noted, God may speak to us "in divers manners". He may speak directly and immediately Himself, as He did to some among the patriarchs and prophets; or by the lips of others, as to those to whom the prophets were sent; or by the writings of those whom, like Moses and the Evangelists, He inspired to write; or by miracles, sometimes asked for, like that of Lazarus, as a sign of the Divine approval, sometimes wrought, like that of the Loaves and Fishes, as an act of spontaneous mercy. And why may He not be held to speak by any event or series of events in which His intervention is clearly manifest? Consider the case of a believer, during some of the earliest ages of the Church, in the days of pagan persecution. He knows he is a member of a world-wide religious organisation distinct from, even persecuted by, the State. Its creed, which purports to have been revealed by God, is handed on unchanged by a body of official teachers, who claim to be appointed and authorised by God Himself, and by parents and others, whose natural duty it is to instruct and to educate young persons. This creed is markedly in contrast with other prevailing creeds. It is immeasurably more worthy of God, and more in harmony with all

[1] Denz., 1794.

that is best in man. It aims at purer and loftier ideals; of religious belief and moral conduct. He sees the whole it actually raises those who profess it to a far higher level Church to be of one mind in Faith, worship, and government. He knows that, such as it is in his time, such it has been substantially for many decades of years, in spite of the natural tendency to deterioration, and of fierce and continued persecution. He examines the lives of his co-religionists, and what does he find? Shortcomings, no doubt, and even graver faults at times; but on the whole a simple Faith in God and His revelation, a hatred of heresy and schism, an eagerness to share in religious privileges, a readiness to obey God's law, a spirit of union and brotherly charity, an unworldliness of aims and endeavours, a willingness to suffer and die for the teachings of the Faith, without complaint or resistance. He may even be witness of extraordinary manifestations of Divine power; and he is sure to hear authentic accounts of them from others. Now, when he takes all these things together, and considers how opposed they are to the tendencies and practice of the outer world, how utterly inexplicable they are, even separately, and still more conjointly, on any natural principles, what more reasonable than that he should see in Catholic Bishops, priests, and parents the organs or instruments, through whom God continues to make His revelation to mankind, and in His providential government and guidance of His Church, and in the results which flow from them, a proof of God's abiding presence in the Church, and His unceasing witness to the truths He has revealed?

And, as age follows age, the Divine testimony grows only stronger and more emphatic. God does not cease from witnessing; and the history of nineteen centuries—the persecutions, heresies, sinfulness, struggles, almost all their incidents—only make His providence for the

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p. 34, lines 2 and 3 should be transposed.

Church appear more wonderful, and His action in the Church to-day a clearer testimony to her doctrines. We can believe then in revealed truths, because of the witness God bore to them in times past, when He revealed them; and no less because of the testimony He still bears to them in the present.

The motive of our Faith, therefore, is the authority of God. We can only make an act of Divine Faith in so far as we rest our assent upon that authority: "I believe the Divinity of Christ, or any other dogma, because God omniscient and infinitely truthful, has revealed, and even now reveals, it to me". No other motive—the reasonableness of the truth proposed for belief, the authority of the Church proposing it, the learning of clergy, of parents, of teachers, or of friends—is sufficient for an assent of Divine Faith to any truth whatever.

LECTURE III.

DIVINE FAITH: ITS SUBJECT MATTER.

WE have already seen that an act of Divine Faith is an intellectual act—an assent to truth, not because of its own intrinsic reasonableness or certainty, or because of any human evidence in its favour, but because of the authority of God, who reveals and guarantees it: "I believe, because it is God, omniscient and infinitely truthful, who speaks to me". We are to inquire, next, what is the subject matter of our Faith: what are the truths, which, and which alone, we can believe on God's authority.

A very brief, and at the same time very accurate, reply may be made to the inquiry: We can believe of Divine Faith all those truths, and those only, which God reveals to us. If it be the case, as we saw it to be the case in our last lecture, that the motive of Divine Faith is the authority of God, then we can believe by Faith everything to which that authority attaches, and by Faith we can believe nothing else.

But a further and most important question remains: What are the truths which God has revealed? I do not, of course, ask for a catalogue of all the statements which God, from the beginning, has made to mankind: I ask, rather, for a general description or definition, by which I may recognise, when religious truths are presented to me, what I can, what I ought to, believe by an act of Divine Faith. I am to believe all revealed truths: What are

the characteristics of the truths which fall within this category?

For the moment, I shall take no account of what are called private revelations. It is clear that as God spoke directly and immediately to the Patriarchs and the Prophets; as He spoke, in our Lord, to the Apostles and their contemporaries; as He spoke to St. Paul at the Damascus gate; so He can speak still to whomsoever He judges fitting, and He can make known to them whatsoever truths He wills. If it be true, as it is true, that public or Catholic revelations—revelations intended for the whole body of Christian believers, and delivered into the guardianship of the Church—ceased with the Apostolic age, then these others are rightly called private. They are made, if made at all, to and for private individuals; they can never become a part of the Faith of the Universal Church. We shall have occasion later to speak in some detail about them; but we need not consider them at present: we are concerned now with the truths of public revelation alone.

And, first, there has been no public revelation, since the last of the Apostles died. God could, of course, had He so chosen, reveal truths from time to time, as well after as before the days of the Apostles, and make such truths binding on the acceptance of mankind. But He has not chosen to do so. The whole context of the New Testament, the language of the Apostles, Our Lord's own words to them, show clearly enough that no such revelation will take place. The duty of the Apostles is to "preach the Gospel," which they have received; to "teach all nations to observe all things whatsoever Christ had commanded". "When the Spirit of truth is come," our Lord tells them, "He will teach you all truth . . . and the things that are to come He shall show you,"[1]

[1] John xvi. 13.

and again, "The Paraclete, the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring all things to your mind, whatsoever I shall have said to you".[1] No place seems left for any public revelation, when once the Apostles have passed away. And so the Apostles themselves understood Our Lord. They deliver their message as the whole truth entrusted to them by God; they beg and command that it may be preserved and handed on, as they have delivered it. "O Timothy," St. Paul writes, "guard the deposit;"[2] and in his second Epistle to the same disciple: "Hold the pattern of sound words, which thou hast heard from me, in faith and in the love which is in Christ Jesus. That good thing guard which was committed to thy trust by the Holy Ghost, Who dwelleth in us."[3] And hence the primitive Church admitted no other Rule of Faith than the preaching of Christ and of the Apostles. Clement of Rome speaks already of "the glorious and venerable rule of tradition".[4] Ignatius Martyr urges the Magnesians to become "rooted in the doctrines of Christ and of the Apostles".[5] Irenæus warns the Faithful to seek truth from the Church alone, "since the Apostles laid up most fully in her as in a rich treasury, all that there is of truth".[6] But I need not quote individual witnesses: the mind of the Church has ever been, as expressed by her Councils, by the Fathers, by all her teachers, to appeal to antiquity in confirmation of her doctrines and in condemnation of religious errors. In the whole history of the Church, no doctrine has ever been defined, no error has ever been condemned, in virtue of any post-Apostolic revelation. The Canon of Vincent of Lerins is universally accepted, and has been

[1] John xiv. 26. [2] 1 Tim. vi. 20. [3] 2 Tim. i. 13.
[4] 1 Ad. Corinth. vii. 2. [5] xiii. 1; Lightfoot, vol. ii. p. 137.
[6] Contra Hær., Lib. iii. c. iv.; M.L. vii. 855.

always acted on, by the Church: That, and that only, is a revealed doctrine of the Faith, "which ever, and everywhere, and by all," has been held to be so. The fifth General Council is even more explicit, when it professes to hold the Faith "delivered by our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ to the holy Apostles, and preached by them throughout the whole world".[1] And the Council of Trent, about a thousand years later, renews the profession, in words which the Council of the Vatican repeats and makes its own, when it defines that "Supernatural revelation, according to the Faith of the universal Church, declared by the Council of Trent, is contained in the written books and unwritten traditions, which were received by the Apostles from the very lips of Christ, or were dictated by the Holy Ghost and handed on by the Apostles, and so have come down to us".[2] Or, as the same Council explains more clearly in its decree on Papal Infallibility: "The Holy Ghost has not been promised to Peter's successors, in order that, through revelations from Him, they may make new doctrines known; but that by His assistance they may carefully guard and accurately explain the revelation or Deposit of Faith delivered through the Apostles".[3]

It is clearly, therefore, a most certain teaching of the Catholic Church, if not, indeed, a doctrine of our Faith, that the Divine Deposit was whole and complete, when the last of the Apostles died; that no further public revelation has been, or ever will be made; and that the subject matter of our acts of Divine and Catholic Faith is to be found within the body of revealed truths "delivered through the Apostles".

But truth may be revealed in various ways. I may make an incident or fact known to you, by speaking of

[1] Denz., 212. [2] *Ibid.*, 1787. [3] *Ibid.*, 1836.

the incident or fact itself, and telling it you simply and directly. If I do, I am said, in technical language, to reveal it to you "formally". I put you in possession of my thought or knowledge of the matter, which is conceived of as a "form" of my mind; and I pledge myself to the accuracy of my knowledge and to my truthfulness in expressing it. Or I may make it known to you indirectly: I may say nothing to you of the fact itself, nothing of the knowledge of it which informs my mind; but I tell you something else, from which you may infer it; and then I am said to reveal it to you "virtually"; because the revelation which I make has the same virtue or efficacy, and leads to the same practical result, as though I told you the fact itself. Of this kind is all that evidence, so common in our Courts of Law, which is called "circumstantial," and which is concerned, not immediately with the facts themselves that are the subject of litigation, but with other facts or circumstances that may be connected with them. Further, each of these revelations—the direct or "formal" and the indirect or "virtual"—may be made in one or other of two ways: I may communicate knowledge to you in language, or by other signs, so clear and easily intelligible that my meaning is understood at once; or I may be obscure and vague, in any one of many varying degrees; so that time and trouble are required to penetrate my meaning. And the inference itself, which you draw from what I say, may follow necessarily and plainly; or it, too, may require time and thought, before you can grasp it with any certainty. We have, therefore, in the ordinary communications of domestic and social life, constantly recurring revelations; some formal, others virtual; and, both formal and virtual, either clear and explicit, or implicit and ambiguous.

Now, if we can thus communicate with one another,

it must be evident that God can do so likewise. Whether He makes His revelation to us Himself immediately or through Divinely appointed channels, He may reveal truth to us as our fellow-men may reveal it. He is under no compulsion to make any revelation; if He graciously condescend to make one, it is for Him to determine as He wills the manner in which it shall be made. In the Divine mind there is, of course, neither inference nor obscurity; these are the defects and limitations of our human knowledge. But God, at best, reveals only part of what He knows; and He is free, as we are, to choose when and what He will reveal, and the more or less plain and perfect methods by which He will express it. That He has exercised this freedom is evident from the whole course of revelation. In the Old Testament one truth is revealed after another, as patriarch follows patriarch, and prophet follows prophet. And what was vague and obscure at first grows clearer and more definite as we approach the days of the Messiah. In Our Lord's own time, new truths are still more abundantly revealed. By Himself, by His Apostles, by the Evangelists, He confirms the Old Testament revelations. He explains the prophecies and points to their fulfilment; He adds a multitude of new teachings about God, the Blessed Trinity, the future state, God's present providence, the Church, our means of grace, our duties and our privileges. And the History of Dogma in Christ's Church, through nineteen centuries—in her controversies, in her Councils, in Papal definitions—is the history of a Divinely guided endeavour not merely to preserve untainted the Faith "delivered through the Apostles," but to determine more exactly and to set forth more clearly what the Apostolic Faith or revelation was.

Assuming, then, that Divine revelation may be, and in fact is, given to mankind in all these various ways, we

are to inquire how far we can believe all or any of the things so revealed, by an act of Divine Faith. And, first, it must be evident that we can believe whatsoever is revealed clearly and directly. If we cannot believe this, if this be not subject matter of Divine Faith, then we can believe nothing whatsoever on God's authority. It is not necessary to prove here that such a revelation has actually been made to us: we have already shown that Christ was God, and that the New Testament is the authentic record of His teachings, and therefore of Divine revelations. We assume these revelations; we assume —what every reader of the New Testament has learned from his reading of it—that many of Christ's teachings were so clear and simple that the very peasants and the children could not fail to understand them; and we say that if such teachings could not, or cannot, be believed of Divine Faith, then there can be no such thing as an act of Divine Faith at all. Nay, more, if we cannot believe on God's authority what we understand fully and are certain that God has said, all Faith is at an end: we cannot believe even men. Formal revelation, then, when clear and explicit, belongs evidently to the subject matter of Divine Faith. And so does formal revelation, even when implicit or obscure. I do not, of course, mean before the obscurity has been dispelled. "Hail, full of grace . . . blessed art thou among women," or, as we should render the Hebrew idiom: "Blessed art thou above all women," contains a formal revelation of our Lady's Immaculate Conception. But it cannot be questioned that the revelation was obscure. The inspired words of the Angel, set down by the Evangelist, expressed the mind or thought of God, Who desired to make known by them this privilege of His Blessed Mother. But their full meaning does not lie on the surface of them. They are not to be so easily and so perfectly understood as

those others which announced the Divine maternity. It took the Church many hundreds of years and many generations of controversy, before the doctrine was fully elucidated and defined. Similarly, when St. Peter made his great confession of Faith at Capharnaum, and Our Lord would reward him for it, the words which He used: "Thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build My Church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. And I will give to thee the keys of the Kingdom of Heaven," [1] can scarcely be said to express plainly and explicitly the dogmas of papal supremacy and papal infallibility. It is not likely that even St. Peter and his co-Apostles so understood them, when they were first spoken. But this was their meaning, the meaning which Our Lord intended them to convey; a meaning which grew clearer in the mind and consciousness of the Church, especially through the discussions which followed on the Council of Constance, and through the Jansenist controversies, until both dogmas were solemnly defined and promulgated in the Vatican Council. Indeed, large part of the infallible teaching function of the Church is concerned with such obscure and implicit revelations. She has not only to "preach the Gospel to every creature," and to defend its truths against heretical attacks; she must also study "the Deposit" committed to her guardianship; penetrate its meaning more and more perfectly, under the guidance of the Holy Ghost, and in due time, as occasion arises, declare that meaning explicitly to the Faithful. We have only to examine cursorily the history of the Councils—of the earliest, such as Nicæa, Ephesus, and Chalcedon, or of the latest, such as Trent and the Vatican—to see the view which the Church herself takes of her duty in the matter, and how faithfully she fulfils her trust.

[1] Matt. xvi. 18.

And we are to note two things, in reference to these revelations, whose meaning, when first committed to the Church, seems uncertain and obscure: One, that, while the uncertainty remains, the Faithful have no call, have not, indeed, the power to make an act of Faith in them. An act of Faith is assent to truth Divinely revealed; and we cannot know what the truth is, which our assent should be given to, until we learn with reasonable certainty the true meaning of the revelation which has been made. The other, that, when the uncertainty has been cleared away, and our assent is to be given, our reason or motive for assenting is still the authority of God. It matters nothing how long the Church takes to dispel all reasonable doubts; what methods she employs to dispel them, or under what circumstances her final decision is brought about: when the true meaning of a revelation, however obscure, is made clear to me, I have the two elements required, and alone required, for an act of Divine Faith: a statement made to me by God, and God's authority pledged to the truth of it. The anxious study of theologians, the careful investigation of Councils, the infallible determination of the Church herself: all these things may have helped me to put doubt away, and to understand distinctly what the Divine statement means; but I do not believe because of them. I know, indeed, what God has spoken, through the assistance they have given me; and now I believe it, because it is spoken to me by God.

Every truth, then, which God has revealed directly; every revelation which God has made, expressing some part, as it were, of the Divine knowledge, some thought, as it were, of the Divine Mind, whether it be plain and explicit, or obscure and vaguely defined, in whatever language or by whatever signs the revelation may be made, if only it contain a statement for the truth of which God vouches, belongs to the subject-matter of our

acts of Faith. We can and should believe it of Divine Faith, when we are reasonably assured of the fact and of the meaning of the Divine revelation.

But can the same be said of those other truths, which we have spoken of as revealed indirectly—inferences from truths directly or formally revealed, and spoken of frequently as "Theological Conclusions"? Such truths have a large part in Catholic teaching. The Fathers, the theologians, the Church herself, in her official and infallible pronouncements, are not confined within the limits of formal revelation. They apply it to individual cases, they draw conclusions from it, which reason and logic dictate. They tell us, for instance, what is the canon of inspired Scripture, what is the meaning of many of its texts. They condemn a book as unfit for Christian perusal; and they point out the heresies which its language imports. They assure us in sermons, and public worship, and the solemn decrees of canonisation, that certain holy souls are with God in heaven. And we might add almost indefinitely to the list. Now it is not claimed that any of these, and of many similar teachings, are contained in formal revelation; that the Apostles received any charge to watch over such truths, and to announce them to the world. It is not denied that they may all become, that many of them have been, the subject of infallible definitions. Indeed, as regards this whole class of doctrines or statements, the necessary consequences drawn from formal revelations, it is agreed almost universally among Catholics that the teaching authority of the Church must be infallible. She cannot, they say, guard infallibly the truths made known to her directly, unless she can pronounce infallibly on facts and doctrines which are their necessary antecedents, or follow necessarily from them. And the Council of the Vatican, in defining papal infallibility,

was careful not to restrict its exercise to formal revelations. It adopted advisedly a formula, which seems to imply that the Church and the Pope are both infallible, whenever they solemnly define "matters of Faith or Morals," whether those "matters" have been formally revealed or not. And, now, admitting such infallibility, admitting even that it has been exercised, can we believe theological conclusions, things "virtually" revealed, with an assent of Faith, which is really Divine? We cannot. Such conclusions are, of course, even before the Church has spoken, infallibly true; for they are infallibly connected with truths of formal revelation. But infallibility, as we have more than once noted, is not inspiration. A statement, a doctrine, may be infallibly certain, may be guaranteed by the Church's infallible authority, and yet may be uninspired, may not be the "Word of God"; and we can only believe of Divine Faith what is the Word of God, what God speaks, and testifies to as true. And if it be urged, as it sometimes is, that, when God directly reveals any truth, He must be taken to reveal, and must intend to make known, all the other truths which are necessarily involved in or connected with it, we answer that it is not so. Let us suppose Him to tell you that all Holy Scripture is Divinely inspired, but not to tell you what the writings are which make up the Scriptures. You inquire into this latter question yourself; you consult with experts; you appeal to tradition and to the solemn and authoritative decisions of the Church. In the result, you see clearly, and because of the Church's definition you are certain with an infallible certainty, that the Books of Holy Scripture are those enumerated by Pope Damasus in the Roman Council of 380, by the Council of Carthage in 397, and, later, by the Councils of Trent and of the Vatican. You believe, therefore, unhesitatingly, and on infallible authority,

that the inspired Books are those entered on the Canon of the Church. But must you, can you, believe it as a revealed dogma of the Faith? Can you believe it by an act of Divine Faith? It is quite certain, I think, that you cannot. I know there have been Catholic theologians who have held it to be more than probable that you can. But I can find no solid ground for admitting their opinion. To believe a truth, by an act of Divine Faith I must assent to it on the authority of God: "I believe that 'the Word became flesh,' because God Himself tells me so," not because He tells me something else, from which I and others and even His Church herself infer it. And God has not told me that the Epistle to the Hebrews is an inspired Epistle. He has told me that all Scripture is inspired; but He has not told me that the Epistle to the Hebrews is part of Scripture: that I have learned through my own investigations; and I also believe it firmly on the authority of the Church. If asked, therefore, why I believe Hebrews to be inspired, I must answer: because God tells me that all Scripture is inspired, and because I know, and the Catholic Church tells me, that Hebrews is part of Scripture. My assent is based on this knowledge and this twofold testimony. It can be warranted by none of them alone. It cannot, consequently, be an act of Divine Faith, which must rest on the sole authority of God.

Or, take again the celebrated controversy which raged round the "Five Propositions" of Jansenius. Cornelius Jansens (Latinised Jansenius), Bishop of Ypres, in our present Belgium, had written a book, which he entitled "Augustinus," because it unfolded, as he thought, the views of St. Augustine on the doctrines of grace. The Bishop himself lived and died in fullest union and sympathy with the Church and the Holy See; but, after his death, his book became the subject of much discussion,

and five propositions were extracted from it, which Rome condemned as heretical. The Jansenists, who took their name from the dead Bishop, admitted that each and all of the five propositions formulated heresy, and that, in consequence, they were rightly and lawfully condemned. But they denied that the propositions were to be found in the "Augustinus," or that the words of the Bishop, in their context and natural sense, bore the meaning which the five propositions expressed. The controversy lasted some fifty years, from 1656 to 1705, during which the Holy See declared the propositions to be extracts from the Bishop's work, and to have been condemned according to the meaning intended by the Bishop; and called upon the Jansenists to reject sincerely and from their heart the five propositions so extracted, in the obvious and natural sense which they bore in the passages from which they were taken—a sense which the Bishop must be held to have intended, and which the Holy See pronounced heretical.[1] There was no question in the controversy about the Church's right to condemn the propositions. If the Church have the right and the duty to teach the truths of Divine Faith infallibly, she must also have the right and the duty to condemn heretical statements or propositions; for heresy is the negation of a truth of Faith. But, had the Church the right to determine that the propositions were contained in the work of Jansenius and bore there, in their context, and according to the mind of their author expressed in his work, the heretical meaning which the Church condemned? That, too, seems certain, beyond all doubt; though the Jansenists denied, and were excommunicated for denying it. The Church has admittedly the power to interpret infallibly from the context, and in the obvious sense in-

[1] Denz., 1098, 1099, 1350.

tended by its author the meaning of language in which revealed dogmas are conveyed; else, she could not determine the doctrines of our religion which are contained in Holy Scripture, or in her own past definitions and professions of Faith. And, if she can so interpret language, when there is question of revealed truth, she must have a similar infallible authority to interpret it, when there is a question of heretical error. The Jansenists, indeed, were utterly illogical; for, if the Church could not judge with certainty the doctrinal meaning of the passages in the book, which the propositions were intended to summarise, how could she be trusted to fix the doctrinal significance of the very propositions themselves? But we are not really concerned here with the authority of the Church or of the Holy See to determine infallibly what has been called "the dogmatic fact"—the existence, that is, in the book "Augustinus," interpreted according to the ordinary laws of language and the writer's obvious intention, of the heretical errors contained in the five propositions. We may assume, without further proof, that Church and Holy See are endowed with that infallible authority. We shall assume too, though this is much less certain, that the Holy See did actually exercise it. And, on these assumptions, we ask: did the infallible decision of the Holy See make assent to that decision an act of Divine Faith? Could the Jansenists, who were called on to make oath that they sincerely rejected "the five propositions extracted from the 'Augustinus,' and in the sense intended by their author," could they believe of Divine Faith that the propositions were really contained in the book, and were heretical, even when understood according to the mind of Jansenius? Clearly, I think, they could not. They could believe with Divine Faith that the propositions were heretical: God Himself had formally revealed as much, when He revealed the

contrary dogmas. But He has nowhere revealed the "dogmatic fact"; He has never Himself said directly to us that the propositions may be found in the book, and that they bear in it the heretical sense attributed to them. I can believe this, because the infallible Church so teaches me. I cannot believe it on the authority of God; for God has made no statement to me on the subject.

We have, thus, two wholly different bodies of truths on which Christ's Church can exercise her infallible authority: truths revealed by God Himself directly and formally, which we can believe of Divine Faith, because God has spoken them; and truths which He has made known indirectly and virtually, because they may be inferred with certainty from the former. These, too, we can believe with infallible certainty, if the Church infallibly defines them; and with a merely human certainty, if we make clear for ourselves the validity of the inference, or believe it on the authority of theologians or of others. We can believe them, that is, by an act of ecclesiastical Faith, if the Church testifies to their connection with formal revelation; with an assent of theological Faith, if proof of the connection be drawn from other sources. But we do not assent to them, and we never can assent, by an act of Divine Faith.

The "Deposit of Faith" then, if we take the phrase in its strict and proper meaning, consists of those truths only which God revealed, which He revealed in themselves or formally, and which He entrusted to the Church through the Apostles. All other truths, however certain, however intimately and necessarily connected with the Deposit, even though infallibly defined and taught by the Catholic Church, lie outside it. They may be, they are, spoken of at times as forming a secondary Deposit—a Deposit loosely, improperly, so called; but, as is clear

the word has then changed its meaning; for these truths have neither been themselves revealed by God, nor entrusted by Him to the Church's keeping.

No doubt, it is not always easy to determine what does and what does not belong to the Deposit. Has God revealed the truth itself which is in question, or only some other truth with which it is connected? Sometimes the judgment of the Church alone can end the controversy. And not every judgment even of the Church. For, though she defines a religious doctrine to be true, it is not, therefore, necessarily contained in the Deposit. It is only when she declares it to be of Divine Faith that I can justly draw that inference from her definition.

But, of course, there are doctrines on which we can pass judgment without any hesitation. Every truth set forth distinctly in Holy Scripture, every Article of the Catholic Creeds, every solemn dogmatic definition of a Pope or of a General Council, is included in the Deposit. As, on the other hand, there are doctrines, or, we had better say, views and opinions, received commonly by Catholics and colouring very largely their religious tone of mind and practices, which are not only no part of the Apostolic message, but have even no necessary connection with it; and in which, consequently, there is no place for the exercise of Divine Faith or even of Church infallibility. I do not say that in all such matters we, Catholics, are free to judge, as each one of us thinks best: for the Church has undoubtedly a teaching authority which falls short of infallibility; and her teaching, even when not infallible, has very special claims on the respect and acceptance of Catholics. But we are concerned at present with acts of Divine Faith alone; and we are to note that religious opinions may be prevalent amongst us, which we cannot assent to by an act of

Divine Faith, and on which the Church cannot even form an infallible judgment. I do not refer merely to the miracles narrated in the legends of the saints: no one, I suppose, feels obliged, on religious grounds, to regard them as authentic. But even the miracles embodied in solemn decrees of Canonisation are not proposed to us under a warrant of infallibility. That the Church is infallible, when she declares the saint to be in heaven, is a doctrine held by most theologians; that she is infallible in the reasons—miracles amongst them—which she assigns is held, I think, by none. Or, take an actual, recurring, phenomenon, such as the annual liquefaction of the blood of St. Januarius at Naples. The facts are patent to thousands of hostile as well as friendly observers; there has never been any question of their reality. No natural explanation of them, even faintly probable, has ever been put forward. The preternatural character of the occurrence, so far as we have means of judging, seems demonstrated. I do not see how we can disbelieve the miracle. But it is no part of our Catholic religion; it was not made known to the Apostles; no action, no judgment, of the Church could make it the subject matter of formal revelation. And, again, very many Catholics believe that Our Blessed Lady appeared in Lourdes to the child Bernadette Subirous, and that a miraculous spring attests the apparition. The Catholic world flocks to Lourdes; the Holy See enriches it with spiritual privileges, and grants a Mass and Office to commemorate the heavenly visit. And yet I am free to deal with all the facts of Lourdes in an entirely critical and impartial spirit. They are no part of my religion. I can never believe in them by Divine Faith: they were not revealed to the Apostles. I can never believe in them by ecclesiastical Faith; for the Church cannot pronounce infallibly upon them: they have no necessary

connection with the Deposit. And so we might go on to discuss the genuineness of the Holy House of Loreto, the authenticity of famous relics, the origin and value of great popular devotions like the Brown Scapular, the Dominican Rosary, the Indulgence of the Portiuncula, and many other similar matters. But there is no need. We have done enough to show that no charge is more unfounded than the one very commonly brought against us: that we Catholics are called on by the Church to believe all manner of incredible doctrines and occurrences, and that we place on the same level of belief the teachings of the Gospel and the pious tales of devout men and women. The truth is that in all such matters the Church claims no belief from us at all. I have no call from the Church to form any opinion on Lourdes or Loreto, on St. Januarius or the Brown Scapular, and the Rosary. If I do set about to form an opinion, of course, I shall give due weight to Catholic feeling and tradition; I shall look almost anxiously for any indication of the Church's mind; I shall not lightly set myself against the current of popular devotion. But I shall also remember that in all these things there can be no question of the Catholic Faith, no question of the infallibility of the Church, no question even of the Catholic mind and temper, while they are approached in a spirit of reverent impartiality.

To sum up: The subject-matter of Divine Faith is the whole body of statements which God has revealed formally or in themselves; and which we can believe because God vouches directly for their truth. And the subject-matter of Divine and Catholic Faith, or of the Faith which all Catholics are bound to exercise, is that body of formally revealed truths which was entrusted to the Apostles, and which has been transmitted to us in the Church from them. Other religious truths we may

believe, upon other grounds; some of them even, upon occasion, we may be called on to believe. But they do not form, they never can form, any part of the Divine Deposit, to which, and to which alone, we can assent by an act of Divine Faith.

LECTURE IV.

DIVINE FAITH: PRIVATE REVELATIONS.

IN discussing the subject-matter of Divine Faith, we implied, without expressly stating, that God may still, if He judges fit, make revelations to some among mankind. He has, indeed, Himself made known to us that the series of public revelations, continued from the beginning until the foundation of the Church, closed with the Apostolic Age. Since St. John died there has been no Divine revelation intended for all men, and binding on all men's acceptance and assent. The Deposit of Faith, the body of revealed truths entrusted to the Apostles, and through the Apostles to the Christian Church, which we are called upon to believe, and can alone believe, by Divine Faith, can receive no further addition. The Church cannot, God will not, add anything to the Deposit. But it does not follow that He may not make private revelations, that He may not explain truths already revealed, and even reveal new truths, to individuals, for their own particular benefit, or for the benefit of others. Throughout the whole course of revelation, He has done so. In the Old Testament, we meet with frequently recurring instances; with some also in the New, though not so frequently; and there is an antecedent likelihood that, under the Christian Dispensation, more particularly in the true Church, during times of prayer and at other times, God will continue to grant such communications.

By private revelation we understand a Divine manifestation of truth not to the Church, but to individuals, not binding on the acceptance and belief of all the Faithful, not even intended, in many cases, for the instruction of the Church at large. We are not concerned with revelations which purport to have been made by angels or by saints: we speak now of those only, which are alleged to have been made by God. That such revelations have been in fact made, is commonly allowed by Catholics. I do not, of course, refer to cases such as the prophecies of St. Malachy of Armagh, and others of a somewhat similar kind, which have attracted notice from time to time in the Church's history. I do not speak of the strange statements which we sometimes read in leaflets and pious books that have been published without ecclesiastical authority. There are many others of a very different character, which have long been treated as of serious value by Catholic writers. I am not concerned to prove their reality. For my present purpose it is quite immaterial whether they were authentic Divine communications or the mere subjective delusions of imaginative souls. We are to discuss the value of such revelations, in the event of their taking place, their relation to the Catholic religion and to Divine Faith. Take, for instance, the revelations of the Blessed Margaret Mary Alacoque. Catholics undoubtedly esteem them highly, and judge them in the main to be authentic. But I do not now ask you to consider whether they are or no. The question we have to deal with here is only this: granting that they are authentic, what is their bearing on the problem we dealt with in our last lecture —the subject-matter of Divine Faith? And, of course, I am not now speaking of those passages or portions of the revelations which treat of well-ascertained, even solemnly defined, doctrines of the Church. The infinite

dignity and loveableness of the Sacred Heart of Our Lord, the adoration of latria which should be paid to It, the sorrow which the ingratitude and sins of men are to Him, the pleasure which He takes in the worthy Communions of the Faithful, the efficacy of the reparation and satisfaction which we can offer for one another: these are not new truths, not even developments or explanations of old truths, first made known to Blessed Margaret Mary. They are part of the public teaching of Christ Himself and of the Apostles; and, though they are emphasised in the writings and conversation of the holy nun, they were held firmly, and definitely taught, by the Church always. But it is otherwise with the special "Promises," which Our Lord is said to have made to the saint, in favour of those who practise devotion to the Sacred Heart, more particularly the devotion of the "Nine First Fridays". They certainly are not all contained in the Apostolic Deposit, nor can they be conclusively inferred from it. And what we say of the revelations which purport, and are commonly believed, to have been made to Blessed Margaret Mary, we may say also of other revelations, such as those of St. Gertrude, St. Hildegarde, St. Bridgid of Sweden, St. Catherine of Siena, St. Teresa, St. Francis of Assisi, the Curé d'Ars, Anna Maria Taigi, Catherine Emmerich, and all the other holy souls, who, when immersed in God by prayer, believe that they receive extraordinary communications from Him. What is the Catholic attitude of mind towards such revelations?

First, assuming even, as we now assume, their genuineness and authenticity, they can never become any part of the Divine Deposit. That, as we have seen, was full and complete, when entrusted to the Church through the Apostles. We cannot, therefore, assent to them by an act of Catholic Faith: that assent we can give only to

truths which have been revealed for all, and which all are bound to receive and to assent to. Nor can the Church, by her approval, alter in any degree the character of a private revelation: she cannot insert it in the Deposit of Faith; she cannot even declare that it may be inferred from that Deposit. Indeed her gift of infallibility does not extend to deciding on the authenticity of private revelations at all. No doubt she may judge, and often judge infallibly, of their doctrinal truth and meaning. But, as their authenticity is entirely distinct from the doctrines they may involve, and was neither revealed to the Apostles nor to be inferred from any of the things revealed to them, it lies wholly without the domain of infallible Church decisions. And, indeed, the Church has never made either claim or attempt to decide the authenticity of any private revelation. She often inquires into such revelations in her processes of beatification and canonisation: examining if they contain anything opposed to the settled doctrines of the Church, or to generally received Catholic teaching. And she sometimes gives them a very qualified approval—usually, to particular revelations; rarely, if ever, to a saint's revelations as a whole. But such approval, even if given, has a very limited significance. It does not imply that the Church in any way guarantees the authenticity of the revelations, or the truth and accuracy of their contents. Pope Benedict XIV, in his great work "On the Beatification of God's Servants, and the Canonisation of the Blessed," expresses briefly and clearly what the Church really does and intends. "If we turn to the question of their approval," he writes, "we must know that it is nothing other than permission to publish them, after serious examination, for the instruction and advantage of the Faithful. For, though an assent of Catholic Faith is neither due nor can be given to these private revela-

tions, even when so approved, they should be believed with a human assent, according to the rules of prudence, which show them to be probable and piously credible." [1] And he goes on to quote John Gerson, the Chancellor of the University of Paris, who explains and defends the publication of legends and miracles and visions and revelations, which are only probably authentic, if they make for the edification of readers, and are not put forward as, or understood to be, absolutely accurate. Private revelations, therefore, can never become part of the Apostolic Deposit; can never be the subject-matter of an act of Divine and Catholic Faith. But can they be believed by acts of Faith which are Divine without being Catholic?

For an act of Faith may be Divine and yet not Catholic. To be an act of Divine Faith at all it must have as its motive the authority of God: it is Divine Faith because it rests on Divine authority. That it may be an act of Catholic Faith something more is necessary: the truth which it affirms must be contained in the Deposit; it must have been revealed for all, and must be binding on the acceptance of all: it is Catholic Faith because it is the Faith of all Catholics. And such being the accepted definitions, it would appear almost evident that we can believe private revelations with an assent of Divine Faith. The sole difficulty of any serious moment which can be urged against the possibility of such assents is the want of satisfactory proof that God has in fact spoken, has made the private relevation which there is question of believing. For, as we have already noted, I cannot believe, on God's authority, unless what I am reasonably certain God speaks and vouches for: and, in the case of private revelations, can I be ever certain that

[1] Bk. ii. c. 32, n. 11.

God has really spoken? It is not necessary, and would lead us too far from our present purpose, to discuss individual cases of private revelation, such as those of Blessed Margaret Mary Alacoque, and to show how entirely reasonable is our conviction that, in the main, they come from God. It will be enough to dwell briefly on some few general considerations, which may be applied, as individual cases arise. And, first, it is certain beyond all doubt that God can, if He wills, give infallible assurance to His creatures that it is He, God Himself, Who speaks to them. When we converse with our friends we can commonly make them sure of our identity. God can do at least as much, if He condescends to address us. He did it when He spoke to Moses from the burning bush; He did it when He called forth Abraham from his father's house; He did it when He bade the Apostles follow Him; He did it when He struck down Paul at the gate of Damascus; He did it in all the cases which the same St. Paul quotes in the eleventh chapter to the Hebrews: almost all of them examples of private revelation. And, if you ask me how and by what means God can prove His personal identity, should He choose to speak to us, I need only answer that He is infinitely wise and infinitely powerful; that He can do all that men can do; and more and better. All this holds true, should He even speak to us through others. It was not Moses only whom God convinced that the voice which he heard and the message which he received were God's: the Egyptians, too, received overwhelming proof of it. The Jews who were gathered in Jerusalem for the feast of Pentecost could have no reasonable doubt, when they heard the Apostles speak, and understood them, each in his own tongue, when they saw Peter and John restore the lame man to health and strength, and when they witnessed the cure of those sick with various diseases on

whom Peter's very shadow fell, that the revelation which the Apostles preached was Divine. You can so sign and seal the message which you send that those who know your signature and seal can recognise your message, no matter through how many hands it may have passed. Why should not God have power to do the same? The Vatican Council tells us that "God has seen fit to unite with His revelation external proofs, Divine works, and chiefly miracles and prophecies, which are most certain signs of a Divine revelation, and suited to the intelligence of all".[1] And if God have done this for the public revelation which He gave to the Apostles, He clearly can do as much for the private revelations which He may choose to make in post-Apostolic times. I do not, of course, say that God must necessarily authenticate every preternatural communication which He makes to mankind. He may speak, and leave it doubtful whether God Himself has spoken: He spoke once and again to Samuel; and the prophet felt assured that Heli, the High Priest, it was who called to him. He may permit delusion and fraud, may allow men and women to believe honestly that they have received Divine communications, when diseased or excited imagination is the only foundation for the belief; may allow them to practise on the credulity of the Faithful, and consciously to lay claim to revelations which they well know they never have received. There is even danger of hallucination and illusion in the case of very holy souls themselves. The private revelations which purport to have been made to persons of admitted sanctity are often strangely at variance with one another. The details of Our Lord's Passion, which saints like St. Brigid of Sweden add, in their revelations, to the account of the Evangelists, cannot all

[1] Denz., 1790.

be true. Indeed, there is almost a likelihood that, as a soul becomes more and more absorbed in contemplation, is raised out of itself, and enters into the ecstatic state, it will grow more liable to confuse its own desires and imaginings and recollections with the communications made to it by God. St. Teresa, it is said, was accustomed to maintain that it is difficult, that she herself had found it difficult, to recognise always the narrow line which separates the true Divine vision from the false; and God has not bound Himself to guide the visionary, or those to whom the visionary may make the vision known. And hence we may have truth and error intermingled in private revelations; and statements and passages which are clearly incorrect may prove nothing against the accuracy and authenticity of all the rest.

We do not, then, desire to minimise the uncertainty which must often attach to private revelations—to all or parts of them. Nor is this the proper occasion to discuss the means which should be adopted and the rules which should be applied in order to dispel it. These things are dealt with in works on the mystical state and on mystical theology. For the present it is enough to have established that God can make it certain, in the degree which He wills, that a revelation, private no less than public, is from Him; and we go on to inquire if we can assent, by an act of Divine Faith, to a private revelation, of which we know for certain that it comes from God. Undoubtedly we can. The Vatican Council defines Faith to be "a Supernatural Virtue by which we believe those things to be true which God has revealed, . . . because of the authority of God revealing, Who can neither deceive nor be deceived".[1] There is no distinc-

[1] Denz., 1787.

tion here of public from private revelations. If a truth be revealed of God, and I assent to it because of His Divine authority, my assent, according to the Vatican, is an act of Divine Faith: it embodies in itself all the elements, which the definition of the Council declares to be necessary and sufficient for such an act. The Council of Trent had practically taught the same doctrine; had, indeed, set it forth in more explicit terms, though without any express definition. In its Sixth Session, Chapter XII, it warns the Faithful against ever holding for certain that they are of the number of the predestined; and it gives as a reason that "it is impossible to know, without a special revelation, whom God hath chosen for Himself".[1] Join with that teaching the corresponding Canon: "If anyone shall say that man, born again and justified, is bound to believe as of Faith that he is certainly of the number of the predestined: let him be anathema," and the Canon which next follows: "If anyone shall say, with an absolute and infallible certainty, that he is sure to receive the wondrous grace of perseverance unto the end, unless he have learned this by a special revelation: let him be anathema,"[2] and it becomes evident that the Council holds private revelations to be possible, and the assent given them, in the event of their being made, to be Divine Faith. Both Councils, more particularly the Vatican, derive their doctrine of Faith from the eleventh chapter of St. Paul's Epistle to the Hebrews; and there can be no doubt as to the mind of St. Paul. It is not only that his definition of Divine Faith: "the substance of things hoped for, the argument of things not seen," is as fully verified in the case of private as of public revelations; but all the more striking examples of Divine Faith, which he quotes through-

[1] Denz., 805. [2] *Ibid.*, 825-6.

out the chapter, were called forth by private revelations: "By Faith Abel offered to God a more excellent sacrifice than that of Cain"; "by Faith Noah, being warned by God concerning things not seen as yet, prepared the ark for the saving of his house"; "by Faith Abraham, when he was called, obeying, went out into the place which he was to receive as an inheritance"; "by Faith Moses, when he was grown up, denied himself to be the son of Pharaoh's daughter"; "by Faith Rahab the harlot perished not with the unbelievers, having received the spies with peace". And he adds yet other instances—all, or nearly all, the response, as we have said, to private revelations. But we need not dwell further on the subject: If Divine Faith be, what we have seen it to be, "an intellectual assent to truth, on the authority of God," since we evidently can assent to any truth, which we are assured God Himself has spoken, and because He it is Who spoke it, our act of assent to a private revelation, which we are certain God has made, must be an act of Divine Faith.

It is, I know, sometimes objected—or, rather, the objection was sometimes taken in the past—that Divine Faith can only then be exercised when the Church proposes revealed truth for our belief; and we have already seen that she never does so, in the case of private revelations. The objection is of little moment: no one attaches any importance to it in our days; and I mention it only in order to state very briefly what the office of the Church is in proposing authoritatively the truths of revelation to the Faithful. The motive of Divine Faith, we have said repeatedly, can never be the testimony of the Church: it must be that of God alone. But the majority of the Faithful can never find out for themselves with certainty that God bears testimony to all the individual truths which in fact He has revealed, many of

which are all-important for our religious and moral conduct. Yet we must have certainty, if we would believe them. The majority of the Faithful can acquire that certainty only from the authoritative and trustworthy evidence of others; and there is no other who can give authoritative and trustworthy evidence except Christ's Church. The teaching office of the Church in relation to our dogmas is, consequently, contained within these limits: She is to guard and to announce the Deposit of revealed truths entrusted to her, and she is to certify with infallible authority that it is God Who has revealed them. But I need not wait for the Church to announce revealed truth to me, I need not wait for her infallible assurance that God reveals it. The Church played no part in the examples of heroic Faith which are quoted by St. Paul. The Church is nowhere mentioned in the teaching on Faith of St. Paul himself, or of Trent and of the Vatican. And if God speaks to me plainly and beyond all reasonable doubt, surely I may believe Him, without waiting for the Church to tell me authoritatively who it is that speaks?

We may believe private revelations, then, if certain that God has made them. But, are we bound to believe? If God make a revelation to me, and I am certain it is God Who speaks, there can be no doubt about my obligation to believe. As the Vatican Council defines, "Since man depends wholly upon God, as on His Creator and His Lord, and since created reason is entirely subject to Uncreated Truth, we are bound to render complete homage of intellect and will to God by Faith, when He makes a revelation to us".[1] For, when God speaks to us, He claims our assent; and to withhold assent, still more to reject His testimony, is to disobey and to insult

[1] Denz., 1789.

Him. We do not conceive of God as making revelation lightly. He must have an infinitely wise purpose in view; and the immediate purpose can be no other than to enlighten our minds with truth, the truth which He reveals to us. God cannot speak to me, and pledge His Divine authority to the truth of what He states, and make clear to me that it is He who speaks; yet leave me free to accept or to reject His statements, or even to put them aside, without either accepting or rejecting them. And this is clearly the case, whether He speaks to me directly and immediately Himself, or through a messenger. If the Divine statement is meant for me, and comes to me authentically from God, how can it matter by what channel it has come? Private and public revelations are alike in this: if I am to believe, the thing of vital moment is that I should be sure that God speaks, and that He speaks to me. And, hence, to reject such private revelations, even deliberately to doubt them, is to sin against the Faith. It is not heresy: for heresy is doubt or rejection of an Article which the Church propounds. It is infidelity, not less grave, and not less hurtful to the soul.

But, if the private revelation have not been made to me, if, so far as I know, it be not intended for me, what is to be my attitude towards it? If I feel assured that God has really spoken, I may not, of course, reject it, I may not even deliberately doubt it. If I know for certain that God has disclosed to Mary of Agreda, or St. Brigid of Sweden, details of the Passion not mentioned in the Gospels, or recorded in the approved tradition of the Church, I may not disbelieve or doubt those details: I can only do so by setting God's authority at naught. But I am not called on to adopt any more positive attitude of mind: I am under no obligation to elicit an act of positive assent. God has not spoken to me; He has

given no one a message for me; He has laid no command upon me. The Catholic revelation is addressed to all; Christ's messengers are Divinely commissioned to make it known to all; all are enjoined to hear it, and believe: "He who believeth not shall be condemned". It is far otherwise with private revelations: they are intended, of course, for the person who immediately receives them; they may be meant for others also to whom that person is ordered to communicate them: they are not intended for the Church at large, not meant to become binding on the general body of the Faithful. If, therefore, God has not spoken to me Himself, or by means of others, while I may not repudiate the truth for which I know He vouches, I am not obliged to take any action on it: I need not form or express any judgment concerning it.

And this generally is our case, where private revelations are concerned. They are little likely to be spoken directly to ourselves. It is almost as unlikely that God will send them to us, speaking by means of others. In practice, we have to consider only those private revelations which are reputed to have been received by pious men and women, and with which we ourselves have no immediate and personal concern. We read of them in the lives of the Saints; we hear of them in religious discourses; they enter largely into some of our popular devotions; they become even at times the subject of considerable discussion and dispute. What is to be our attitude towards them?

We are to be persuaded, first, that our religion is not in any way dependent on them. The Church is not pledged to their authenticity, even when she submits them to careful examination, and then permits them to be published in printed books, or to be spread otherwise abroad among the Faithful. She never allows them to

influence her dogmatic teaching; she never makes use of them in her explanation or defence of dogma. The Catholic Faith would not be altered in any least detail of belief, if all the private revelations granted since the Apostles died were utterly blotted out from memory. No need to discontinue even one of our devotions, though the private revelations which suggested them were shown to be entirely untrue. Take, for instance, the devotion to the Sacred Heart of Our Lord, and suppose that the revelations of Blessed Margaret Mary Alacoque were totally discredited: no principle on which the devotion rests would undergo the slightest change. We should still believe about Our Lord and about His Sacred Heart exactly what we believe to-day. We should pay them exactly the same worship. The very exercises of devotion with which we honour them would remain the same. And we may say as much of almost all our popular devotions.

We should note, secondly, that private revelations are antecedently likely to be made in the true Church of Christ. There are sure to be miracles in her from time to time; and if souls give themselves earnestly to prayer, and enter into very close communion with Almighty God, it is probable He will reward them at times by conversing with them; which is scarcely to be conceived of without private revelations. But, when we come to deal with individual cases, mere likelihood points the other way. Miracles and revelations are the promised exceptions to the common law, by which God guides and governs mankind; and, if exceptions, they have to demonstrate their right to be received as genuine: the probabilities in the concrete are against the occurrence of the exceptional.

Further, it is difficult to secure such evidence as will prove, beyond reasonable doubt, that the exceptional has

occurred: that a Divine revelation has really been made. We have to trust, in general, to the uncorroborated testimony of the men or women said to have first received the revelations, and who are frequently unable to form a prudent judgment on the very experiences through which they may have passed. There are rules, no doubt, for the better identification of genuine revelations; but the process of identification is a delicate one, and is rarely quite conclusive. As in the case of Our Lord, when He taught on earth, miracles would be a sufficient and satisfactory demonstration. But I do not think there is any record of miracles which God has worked in proof of private revelations: He seems to reserve such proofs for the Apostolical Deposit.

Besides, I am under no obligation to inquire into the genuineness of private revelations. In public revelations, God speaks to all, and binds all to hear and to believe. If He have spoken at all, He has spoken to me also; and the matter may be of supreme importance to me. No wonder I should feel bound to inquire into the genuineness of such a revelation. But, in private revelations, He does not speak to all; the presumption is that He does not speak to me; the matter is not of great, else it would be of general, importance: I am not called on to believe, nor, therefore, to inquire. And the resulting temper of mind will be that of a wise neutrality: I shall form no definite or decided judgment on the matter. Instances may occur, no doubt, in which we can at once reject pretended revelations, on the ground of their evident improbability. We remain utterly incredulous, in presence of the cleverest and most mysterious of spiritualistic phenomena: they are so frivolous, so obviously unworthy of seriously-minded, reasonable men and women, either in this or in another world. And we can sometimes judge of private revelations in a similar

manner. We have authentic and accepted standards with which to compare them. We have the public and private revelations of the Old Testament: we have, what is still more important, the many revelations made by Christ in the New. We are familiar with their whole setting—the grave, gentle, loving and lovable character of Our Lord Who makes them; the subject-matters with which He deals; the language which He employs. We know something of what to expect, if we meet with any revelation which purports to have been made by Him. It must harmonise, if it be examined, with the Gospel revelations; it must be in keeping with the Gospel character of Our Lord; it must be concerned with grave issues, and must touch them in a grave spirit. And hence, to take only one example, revelations which picture Our Lord as wholly unlike the Christ of the Evangelists, as harsh, unattractive, hard to please, censorious of little faults, severe in punishing them, even when they are committed by His friends—and such are to be found among the revelations of some modern saints—should be looked on with suspicion; they may even, I think, be held to be untrue. But, generally, as I have said, we shall act more wisely if we make no attempt at all to judge private revelations: the data for a prudent judgment are rarely within our reach. We shall not, of course, give credence to them lightly. We do not lightly attribute statements to a merely human friend, of whatever nature they may be. We look usually for some proof that he has made them. And Divine revelation is a thing too sacred, the ascription of a statement to God Himself too solemn to be treated off-hand and without thought. It would even seem a grave want of the respect which is due to God to attribute revelations to Him on evidence which one makes no attempt to weigh, or on grounds which one should recognise to constitute

no evidence at all. Besides, a too ready acceptance of private revelations must lead to religious error often: for it is religious error to hold even what is true on the authority of God, if God, in fact, have not revealed it. And it may lead to superstition and to worse evils: some of the saddest falls and most hurtful scandals in the Church have been due to private pseudo-revelations. Nor shall we, on the other hand, reject them without investigation. There is a temper of mind which puts miracle aside, on a priori grounds: miracle is impossible, or there are no post-Apostolic miracles, or there are no means by which to recognise a miracle, even should it occur. Similarly, there is a temper of mind which puts private revelation aside, not indeed on the ground that God cannot speak with men, but because He never does speak; or, if He do, we cannot distinguish His communications with any certainty from the dreams of spiritual enthusiasts and the imaginings of hysteria. And there is danger of such a temper of mind, particularly in countries which are largely Protestant. Protestantism, in its most uncompromising forms, while it demands a private and personal revelation to each individual believer, would limit its scope to certain Gospel promises, and denies all further post-Apostolic revelation. Of course, this Protestant view is untenable and absurd. If there be a God, He must be able to communicate with the rational creatures He has made. He must be able to prove clearly to those who receive His communications, and to others, who hear of them, that they are really from Him. If He cannot, He is neither all powerful nor all wise. Private revelations are, therefore, evidently possible; nay, further, as we have already noted, they are likely to occur. It would be foolish, consequently, as it would be narrow-minded, to reject private revelations on any general grounds. Each must

stand or fall on its own merits. And the only question to be decided is: What evidence can be put forward that God has spoken? We are not commonly in a position to decide the question: we have neither time nor opportunity nor qualifications to examine and weigh the evidence. The Church, as Benedict XIV warns us, gives no guarantee, even when canonising the Saints, that their revelations are authentic. We must depend, in the main, on the uncorroborated testimony of the visionaries themselves, or on the still more attenuated testimony of their biographers. Only rarely can the testimony, when carefully examined, produce a reasonable certainty that the revelation is from God, and warrant an act of Divine Faith in the truth revealed. More rarely still can we acquire that certainty ourselves: we must rest satisfied with an attitude of hesitation. But to hesitate is not to reject; to profess one's inability to decide is not to declare a revelation to be delusive and untrue. And the undecided, the neutral, frame of mind, is our best and most reasonable attitude, in dealing with nearly all private revelations.

It does not, however, follow from this that we should withhold assent from every private revelation. It only follows that rarely, if ever, can we believe in them by an act of Divine or even ecclesiastical faith. We can sometimes believe in them by an act of human faith, which may on occasion attain to a kind of certainty, but will generally remain on the lower level of a greater or less probability. To illustrate this by an example: Blessed Margaret Mary Alacoque was able, I have no doubt, to believe of Divine Faith the substance of the revelations which, she says, were made to her, concerning devotion to the Sacred Heart. We can believe it, as it appears to me, neither of Divine nor of ecclesiastical faith. But we can believe it, if not with human certainty, at least

with a large measure of probability, because of the practical consensus of the Faithful, and the testimony of books and preachers, which are derived from the evidence of the Blessed herself and of her contemporaries.

And now to sum up: private revelations are such as are made not to the Church, but to individuals, and for themselves only or for a limited number of believers. When it is certain that they have been made by God, they can be assented to, on the Divine authority; and the assent will be an act of Divine Faith. God can, if He so wills, make it abundantly clear to those whom He immediately addresses, and to others, to whom He sends His message, that it is He Who speaks to them; and, if He do, they are as much bound to believe His private revelations as the Deposit of Catholic Faith itself. Those who are in neither category—to whom He neither speaks directly nor sends any message—if they are sure that He has spoken, cannot reject as false what they know God testifies to as true; but they need not positively believe: for He does not speak to them; He does not lay claim to their assent. Not always, however, does God make it clear to the visionary himself that it is God Who speaks; even less frequently can it be shown that all which claims to be revealed is really from God; and it is only seldom that the Divine origin of any private revelation can be satisfactorily proved to others than those whom God immediately addressed. In our own case, then, who receive no private revelations, and to whom none is sent, our acts of Divine Faith are concerned solely with the Catholic Deposit, entrusted to the Apostles, and through them to the Catholic Church; our acts of ecclesiastical Faith, with the connected truths, which the Catholic Church proposes with certainty, sometimes infallibly, for our belief. And, as to private revelations, we

are free to examine them in a perfectly impartial spirit; to reject or to accept them as the evidence may point; or, more wisely still, in the great majority of cases, to withhold all definite judgment upon them, as not being addressed to ourselves.

LECTURE V.

DIVINE FAITH: ITS REASONABLENESS.

We have seen that an act of Divine Faith is an intellectual assent to truth revealed by God, and because God reveals it. The motive of our Faith, the reason for our assenting, must be Divine, must be the infinite knowledge and infinite truthfulness of God, Who can neither deceive nor be deceived. And the subject-matter of Divine Faith is whatever God reveals. It matters nothing whether He reveals doctrines or events; things past or present or yet to come; Himself directly, or through the instrumentality of others; to all mankind or only to a few. Whosoever knows with certainty that God speaks to him is bound to believe firmly whatsoever God says. And thus we are bound to believe private revelations, if God should make them to ourselves, or send them to us through His messengers, and should give us at the same time an assured certainty that it is He who speaks, or sends the message to us. We may believe by Divine Faith, even revelations not intended for us, if we know of a surety they were made by God: His testimony is equally infallible, under whatsoever circumstances it has been given. But private revelations concern us very little: we do not commonly receive them; we cannot easily attain to any certainty that others have received them; the Church does not guarantee them; so-called revelations are frivolous often and seemingly unworthy of a Divine origin; they not unfrequently even contradict

each other. If time and opportunity were given for investigation, you might, perhaps, attain, if not to certainty, at least to some solid probability, of their genuineness and meaning; but the difficulties are too many, the result at the best too generally doubtful, the advantage of forming a definite opinion too unimportant, to make much investigation profitable. The attitude of mind which Catholics generally should adopt towards private revelations would seem to be that which the Church herself adopts officially—one of wise reserve and toleration. And so the Apostolical Deposit offers us practically the only subject-matter in which Divine Faith can be exercised.

And, now, we proceed to ask: Is our assent to that Deposit reasonable? In other words, are we, can we be, quite certain that God revealed it? For it must be supremely reasonable to believe what I am certain God has spoken. Men do not, indeed, ever call in question the reasonableness of Faith, in the hypothesis of a Divine revelation, and of a sufficient certainty that God has made it. The contention of unbelievers is that no revelation has been made, or that we, at any rate, can never gain any certain knowledge of it. Non-Catholics who deny, as all non-Catholics must deny, our claim to the exclusive possession of religious truth, can only do so on the ground that God has not revealed the distinctive tenets of Catholicism. If they were convinced that God has pledged His authority for the truth even of papal infallibility and of transubstantiation, they would unhesitatingly accept the doctrines. A fundamental question, therefore, in our religious controversies, as well as in our own assent to the truths of Faith, is the one we are about to deal with: What reasonable assurance have we that God vouches for the doctrines we believe?

And we are not now speaking of doctrines which we

accept on the authority of the Church, fallible or infallible. We consider those truths only which belong to the Deposit, and to which we can give assent by an act of Divine Faith. These doctrines, we Catholics maintain, are to be found in Holy Scriptures and in Divine tradition. They are embodied in the various Creeds or Symbols, sometimes briefly, sometimes at greater length—in the Apostles' Creed, the Creed of Nicæa, the Athanasian Creed, the Creed of Pope Pius IV, and others. They come to us in the decrees of General Councils, and in rare and solemn definitions of the Popes. They are expressed in the ordinary teaching of the Church, in the consentient mind of the Catholic Episcopate, when delivering, themselves or by their clergy, the revealed message entrusted to them. I say "when delivering the revealed message": for the ordinary teaching of the Church, through the Episcopate, is not to be confined to the Apostolic Deposit. The Church must explain revealed truth, must point out the consequences which follow from it, must condemn errors which lead up to its rejection, must tolerate pious opinions which do not contradict it, if only these pious opinions rest on a solid probability, and lay no claim to certainty. But this teaching, even when infallible, is no expression of the Deposit; that we can only find in the truths which the Church puts forward as revealed to her by God.

This Creed, therefore, of the Church, this body of doctrines which Catholics profess, we hold upon Divine authority. And our Catholic Faith is reasonable, because we know for certain that it is revealed by God. Note, that we claim to "know for certain," not evidently. When truth is so presented to the mind that, rightly understood, it coerces the intelligence, and compels assent, we have "evidence" in the strict and proper sense. Such evidence belongs to many a priori truths and to the pos-

tulates and inferences of mathematical science. But human life does not wait on evidence of this overwhelming kind, before venturing to take decisions of the most far-reaching and important character. Much of life's business can have no more solid foundation than probabilities. I select a profession, because I may probably, not certainly, still less evidently, succeed in it. You lend money, you trust your friends, you make promises, you choose a wife, you do innumerable other things, in the ordinary course, with the hope, sometimes with the certainty, never with any real evidence, that the result will be as you desire. Or, take, again, the very foundation of all the happiness of home. We grow up in the persuasion that those whom we address as father and mother are so in very deed. Have we any proof of it? Proof, in the sense of evidence, we have none. We have not, and, from the nature of the case, we cannot have, any mathematical certainty that we were not adopted by them. But we have a moral certainty, a certainty which shuts out all deliberate doubt, and which makes it obligatory upon us to give them the respect and love and obedience which true parents alone can claim. Admitting, then, this clear distinction between evidence and certainty, and remembering that certainty, not evidence, is man's rule and guide in all the most important affairs of life, we have to show that it is certain, although not evident, that God has revealed the Catholic Faith.

We must show it to be certain: for we cannot believe with Divine Faith, unless we are certain that it is God Who speaks to us; and to be certain is to entertain no deliberate doubt. Involuntary misgivings may cross, may even haunt, the mind: the more important a truth is, the more likely that misgivings will arise. But such misgivings must not be voluntary; they must not become a wilful fear that it is error not truth to which I have

assented. I cannot hold a truth with certainty while I deliberately fear that it is untrue. To be certain, therefore, that God has revealed the whole Deposit of Catholic Faith is to hold, without deliberate doubt or fear, that He has done so; even though I may have, and, as we shall see later, can have, no real evidence of the fact. And such certainty is essential to an act of Divine Faith. For Divine Faith is not a mere opinion, not a wavering or hesitating judgment, but a firm and steadfast assent. It is "the substance of things hoped for, the argument," or proof, "of things not seen".[1] It is a conviction, like that of Abraham, "who against hope believed in hope, that he might be the father of many nations . . . who was not weak in Faith . . . and in the promise also of God staggered not by distrust . . . most fully knowing that whatsoever He hath promised He is able also to fulfil".[2] It is more firm, as St. Peter writes,[3] than the knowledge which comes from very sight and hearing. It must be the unchanging assent, of which St. Paul says to the Galatians: "Though we or an angel from heaven should preach unto you any other gospel than that which we have preached, let him be anathema".[4] It should lead men and women, learned and unlearned, gentle and simple, on the threshold of life as at life's close, to shed their blood, if necessary, rather than doubt, or disavow it. And hence the constant teaching of Fathers and theologians that "Faith is an unhesitating assent"; that it is "a most firm persuasion"; that it is "an undoubting belief". Hence the concluding paragraph of the Athanasian Creed: "This is the Catholic Faith, which unless a man believe faithfully and firmly, he cannot be saved".[5] And hence the various Professions of Faith,

[1] Heb. xi. 1. [2] Rom. iv. 18. [3] 2 Peter i. 16.
[4] Gal. i. 8. [5] Denz., n. 40.

beginning always with the words: "I firmly believe," or "We firmly believe, and unreservedly profess"; and the definition of the Vatican Council that "those who have once embraced the Faith, under the guidance of the Church, can never have a just cause for change or doubt".[1] And again: "If anyone shall say that the condition of the Faithful and of those who have not yet attained to the one true Faith is alike, so that Catholics may ever have just cause for calling in doubt the Faith which they have already embraced, under the guidance of the Church, . . . let him be anathema".[2] Now, if our Faith is to be firm and unhesitating, we must be certain that God has revealed the truths which we believe. As Pius IX expressed it, in one of his Encyclicals: "Who is ignorant, or can be ignorant, that God, when He speaks, is to be unreservedly believed, and that nothing accords more with reason itself than to accept and hold fast whatsoever God has certainly revealed?"[3] From which he infers that "human reason, lest, in a matter of such moment, it should be deceived and go astray, ought diligently to inquire into the fact of revelation, in order to learn for certain that God has spoken, and so render Him 'reasonable homage,' as the Apostle most wisely teaches". Innocent XI, many years earlier, had condemned the Jansenist theory that "an assent of Faith, at once supernatural and helpful to salvation, may co-exist with a merely probable knowledge of revelation, and even with a fear that perhaps God has not really spoken".[4] And the same teaching underlies his condemnation of another Jansenist proposition: "A man may prudently discard a supernatural assent which he had previously entertained," as it underlies the still more express declaration of the Vatican, already quoted: "If anyone shall say that . . .

[1] Denz., 1794. [2] *Ibid.*, 1815. [3] *Ibid.*, 1637. [4] *Ibid.*, 1171.

Catholics can ever have sufficient reason for suspending judgment, and calling in doubt the Faith they had embraced through the teaching of the Church . . . let him be anathema ".[1] Pius X too condemned, not long since, as a Modernist error, the opinion that "the assent of Faith rests ultimately on an aggregation of probabilities "[2] —an opinion which the Modernists had attributed to Newman, and which supposes, contrary to Newman's whole theory of certainty, that an aggregation of probabilities must remain a probability only, no matter how many and how well-founded the probabilities may be: as though a score of witnesses, if none be beyond suspicion, could give you no more certainty than any one of them alone. Now it is clear that I may prudently lay aside a supernatural assent, and may reasonably suspend judgment, and may call in doubt the whole Catholic Faith, if I am uncertain as to whether or no God has spoken, if it be only probable that He has, if I deliberately and prudently doubt that there has been any Divine revelation at all. If I am to believe the Trinity of Persons in God by an act of Divine Faith, I must believe it firmly as, and because it is, revealed by God; and how can I believe it firmly if I am uncertain that God has revealed it? How can I say: "My God, I believe most firmly that there are three Persons in Thy One Divine Nature, and I believe it most firmly because Thou the infallible Truth hast revealed it; but I have only a probability, not certainty, I have even grave doubt, that Thou hast made any such revelation at all"? It is in Divine as in human faith: I cannot assent to a statement on the authority of a witness, unless I am sure that the witness has actually made it.

But it is not necessary that the fact of revelation

[1] Denz., 1815. [2] *Ibid.*, 2025.

should be made evident to us. There is no need to have it demonstrated with mathematical clearness that God has spoken. Certainty which excludes deliberate doubt, though it fall short of evidence, will be abundantly sufficient. We have seen already that such certainty is the ordinary guide of human life, in many of its most important concerns. We must often venture our most precious interests on the merest probabilities; we are unusually fortunate, when we can gain a moral certainty; but the whole business of life would be arrested, if we might never act, unless upon strict and proper evidence. I have no evidence that father and mother are my parents at all; no evidence that I have been validly baptised; no evidence that my confessor is a priest; no evidence that my married friends are really wife and husband: indeed, they can have no such evidence themselves. In all these things, and in hundreds like them, I do not wait for evidence; I know evidence is not, and never will be, available: I act, and every wise man acts, on moral certainty.

To make an act of Divine Faith, then, in any truth whatever, I must be certain that God has revealed it; and to be certain is sufficient: there is no need of evidence. If I am sure that God has spoken, my belief in all that He has said is supremely reasonable.

Can we, then, be sure that God has revealed the Deposit of Catholic Faith—the whole body of truths contained in it, and each truth in particular? If we can be, if we are, then our Faith as Catholics is not merely reasonable; we are not merely justified before reason in embracing and adhering to the Catholic religion: reason itself sees and dictates to us our obligation to be Catholics. And it is certain that God has revealed all the dogmas of our Faith, all the doctrines contained in Holy Scripture and Divine tradition, as declared by the doc-

trinal decrees of General Councils and the solemn definitions of the Popes.

If we take, for instance, the Creed of Pope Pius IV, or, as it is perhaps more generally called, the Tridentine Profession of Faith, with the addition due to the Vatican Council, we have a detailed summary of all the chief dogmas of the Christian religion, and of the distinctive doctrines of the Catholic Church. No one can make that Profession of Faith sincerely, and not believe the whole Catholic Faith; no one can reject wilfully or knowingly even one of its clauses, and remain in true internal communion with the Church. And there is no one of the assertions contained in it, no one of the "Articles" that make it up, which it is not certain that God Himself has revealed. Consider for a moment the doctrine of papal supremacy, which it now embodies, and which separates us Catholics from all the Christian sects. It is not evident, I think, from the New Testament writings, it is not evident from primitive traditions, that the doctrine has been revealed to us by God. But to the impartial inquirer it is, I think, certain beyond reasonable question. When we examine the prominent, the principal position, which Christ gave to Peter among the Apostles, the promise to make him the foundation and the ruler of His Church, the solemn charge to feed the lambs and feed the sheep; when we remember the assumption of leadership and of authority by the Saint which the Gospels and the Acts of the Apostles record, a leadership and an authority which the Apostles themselves acknowledged in St. Peter, during Christ's lifetime on earth, and still more after His Resurrection and Ascension; when we study what remains to us of the earliest Church history, in the era of persecutions and in the immediately succeeding centuries, we find overwhelming proof that Christ bestowed a supremacy of jurisdic-

tion upon Peter, that He meant it to endure in Peter's successors, and that He made His mind plainly known to Peter and to the Church. The proof is not of that strictly evidential character which compels belief. Though I see the full force of the arguments, I can still withhold assent; and I can do so all the more readily, if I see them through an atmosphere of religious prejudice, or if grave worldly interests make the other way. Prejudice, I think, may even be so strong, the interests affected may be so grave, as wholly to obscure the cogency of all such arguments, and hinder an honest inquirer from yielding to them. But, in the absence of all prejudice and opposing interests, they are abundantly sufficient to produce conviction. Or, take again the dogma of the Real Presence of Our Lord in the Blessed Eucharist. Read dispassionately the sixth chapter of St. John's Gospel, in which the promise of the Eucharist is first given; read in the Synoptists the account and words of Institution at the Last Supper; weigh St. Paul's narrative of the same event in the eleventh chapter of his first Epistle to the Corinthians; consider the testimony of the primitive Church in her practice, in the writings of her Apologists, in the very accusation of cannibalism brought against her by her pagan enemies; have regard to the clear and uninterrupted teaching and ritual of Fathers and Bishops, until the sixteenth century; and there seems to be no room for any serious doubt as to the truth and revelation of the dogma. And we might take up one after another the Articles of Catholic belief, which constitute the Creed, and we should find in the Scriptures and in Catholic tradition, without any appeal to Church authority, proof enough to make us certain that they have been all revealed by God.

But we have a stronger and more convincing argument than any we can form for ourselves from the

Scriptures and tradition: we have the authority of the Catholic Church. The Catholic Church tells us that the Faith which she holds and teaches is Divinely revealed; and her authority is sufficient to make us certain of the fact. Even were we to put aside for the moment the infallible guidance which she has been promised, in guarding and explaining the Deposit, we may find in her very existence itself, as the Vatican Council declares, "a great and abiding argument that God has spoken, and a decisive testimony to her own Divine mission".[1] Her origin, her growth, her history, the persecutions through which she has passed and is passing so triumphantly, her world-wide expansion and marvellous unity, the changeless character of her teaching, the beauty and holiness of her doctrines, the excellence of virtue to which she exhorts her children and to which many of them attain, the abiding miracle which she is in herself: all these together constitute a conclusive proof that her claim is well founded, when she tells us that the Deposit of Faith has come to her from God. The teaching authority of the Church is not, however, a mere outcome of her miraculous existence: it is also a special privilege expressly conferred upon her by her Founder. In studying the Foundation and Constitution of the Church of Christ, we saw that He established a society to carry on and complete His work; that He imposed on it the duty of preserving and preaching all the truths which He Himself and the Holy Spirit should make known to it; that He promised it His continued presence and assistance, to save it from all error in the fulfilment of this duty: and we saw that the society so established is the Catholic Church.[2] The Catholic Church, therefore, is the Divinely

[1] Denz., 1794.

[2] Cf. "The Church of Christ: Its Foundation and Constitution." Longmans & Co.

appointed and infallible guardian and teacher of Divinely revealed truth. It is her office to teach, and to teach infallibly, that truth itself; and to determine and declare infallibly what is and what is not Divinely revealed. For she cannot teach revealed truth infallibly, unless she can declare infallibly what truths have been revealed. It is clear then that the Catholic Church can tell us with an absolute certainty—nay, more, infallibly—that God has spoken to us; that the Deposit of Catholic Faith, the whole body of truths which make up the subject-matter of our acts of Divine Faith, have been revealed by God. And the Catholic Church does so tell us. She tells us in solemn general decrees, like those of Trent,[1] and of the Vatican,[2] that the whole of supernatural revelation is contained in the books of the Old and of the New Testament, and in unwritten Divine tradition; and that the books of Scripture "are sacred and canonical . . . because they were written under the inspiration of the Holy Ghost and have God for their Author". She tells us so at times in particular definitions, as in that of the Immaculate Conception: "We pronounce, declare, and define that the doctrine which holds the Blessed Virgin Mary to have been preserved untouched from every stain of original sin, in the very first instant of her Conception . . . is revealed by God, and must, therefore, be believed firmly and constantly by all the Faithful".[3] And she is ever telling us so in the discharge of her ordinary teaching office, by the Episcopate dispersed throughout the world, who declare to the flocks entrusted to them what the revealed message is, what it is they must believe because God reveals it to them.

I do, then, know revealed truth for certain. I do know beyond all reasonable doubt, partly, it may be, through

[1] Denz., 783. [2] *Ibid.*, 1787. [3] *Ibid.*, 1641.

personal study and investigation of particular dogmas, and partly through the testimony which the Catholic Church bears to the whole Deposit, that all the doctrines contained in it "have God as their author," are revealed to us by God. It must, therefore, be entirely reasonable to believe them, with a firm, an unwavering, assent.

And this is one chief among our many privileges as Catholics: that we can know with such absolute certainty, on infallible authority, what God reveals; and can be so entirely satisfied that our Faith is reasonable, when we believe it. I do not mean, of course, that neither doubt nor controversy can exist amongst us touching points of doctrine: has God revealed, has He not revealed them? The whole history of the Church and of her Councils shows that such doubts and controversies may exist, and are to be authoritatively decided when the need arises. Our privilege is that, in matters of Catholic Faith, there is so little which is uncertain; that almost all the truths of revelation are set out in the Church's authoritative teaching; and that there is ever with us a living and infallible judge of controversies, who can solve all doubts as occasion may require, and can give us an infallible certainty that God has spoken. A man may, no doubt, by his own "private judgment," convince himself that a truth or truths have been revealed, and that it is right and reasonable he should believe them. He may, too, receive "inward testimony from the Spirit," and so be assured of the revelation. But most men can discover comparatively little of religious truth by their own personal investigation; "internal spiritual sense and savour" seems rarely to be granted; and both lead to such religious contradictions and divisions that God can never have meant either to be the common means of deciding on the source —Divine or human—from which revelations come. Nor are Anglicans in much better case, who appeal to "the

testimony of the undivided Church". "That is truly revealed of God," they say, "which the Catholic Church, before the unhappy division of East from West, some thousand years ago, unanimously taught and believed to be revealed." The principle, of course, is true: the Church of Christ was infallible then as it is now; but the principle is of little help to Anglicans. How shall I know for certain what the undivided Church believed and taught? Who will guarantee the authenticity of her records? Who will interpret to me their authoritative meaning? If private judgment is so liable to err, when there is question of the Sacred Books themselves, is it likely to be a safer and more satisfactory guide, when there is question of decrees of Councils and the writings of Church Fathers?

But here it may be asked: What of the poor and uneducated, among the members of the Catholic Church herself? They cannot inquire into the authenticity of Catholic revelation. They know nothing of the Church's history, of her persecutions, triumphs, miracles, sublime doctrines, Catholic unity, and the rest. They learn their religion from their parents, their teachers, their priests, and from friends and neighbours who are Catholics. Do they believe in the doctrines of Catholicism, because those doctrines have been revealed by God? And how can they have any reasonable certainty that God has revealed them? What proofs do their clergy lay before them that God has spoken? In answering the question, we repeat, what was dwelt on in a previous lecture, that the motive of assent, in an act of Divine Faith, must be the Divine authority. Even the poorest and least educated must believe in the Real Presence, not because priests teach it, or because all Catholics are agreed in holding it, or because the Church has solemnly defined it; but because God, Infallible Truth, has revealed it. Else they

make no act of Divine Faith at all. And, so much being premised, we need not be anxious about the mental condition of uneducated Catholics. They do not, I think, assent to the doctrines of our religion, because parents or priests have so taught them. They do not assent, because friends and neighbours are Catholics. But is there not a danger that they may assent, because it is the Church which teaches? Our clergy, in their instructions, insist so frequently that the doctrines which they preach are the doctrines of the Church, we appeal so commonly to the decisions of the Church, and our Catholic people are so accustomed to look with reverence to the authority of the Church, that great care should be taken to place the true motives of Divine Faith distinctly before them. It would be an advantage, I have no doubt, if the phrase, "God tells us," or "God tells us through the Church," were substituted for "Our Holy Mother the Church teaches". But our people, generally, I think, are conscious, in their act of Faith—sometimes it may be vaguely, but always sufficiently—of a higher authority than any which is merely human. They know that the truths which they assent to are Divine; that they come to them from God; that it is God Who invites them to believe; that a sin against Faith is a sin, not against the authority of the Church, but against that of God Himself. And, if so, the motive of their assent is the authority of God. But how can they be certain God speaks to them? And, if not certain, how can their Faith be reasonable? It will be admitted, I suppose, that certainty does not rest on the same arguments in all minds, nor even in the same mind at different periods of mental development. The reasons which will produce, and rightly produce, certainty in the case of a child, may be utterly inadequate in the case of a mature and educated mind; may, indeed, prove quite insufficient, as the

child develops into the man. For certainty, as we have seen, is assent to truth, with exclusion of all deliberate doubt; and reasons which appear convincing to a child, in the absence of all reason to the contrary, must often lose their efficacy, as knowledge widens and suggests difficulties and doubt. Let us suppose, then, that the true motive of Catholic Faith—a Divine revelation—is put before the child, or before an uneducated Catholic, whose mind in many ways is still a child's. He is told by parents that the Catholic religion comes from God, was delivered to mankind by Jesus Christ. His teachers repeat the statement in the schools. His companions accept it, as of course. His clergy preach it in catechetical instructions and in sermons. His co-religionists all believe it. He knows by report that Catholics, the world over, learned and unlearned, all look on it as certain; that the clergy everywhere, in union with their Bishops, and the Bishops everywhere, in union with the Pope, impress it on the Faithful. And no reason occurs or is suggested to him for any serious doubt: in fact, he does not doubt. He has abundant motives for assenting; he has none for doubting. The assent which he gives is, therefore, certain. And if it be urged that it is certain, not because of the arguments on which it rests, which would prove insufficient to bear the strain of altered circumstances—of a larger experience, a wider reading, a more highly cultivated judgment, I answer, in the first place, that it is not so. I say that the persistent, world-wide, and unanimous belief of Catholics that God is the author of their Faith, is an argument in favour of the belief, which no experience and no mental culture can weaken or set aside. And I answer, secondly, that, even were it otherwise, certainty is dependent on the arguments which affect the mind, at the time when the assent is given, and not on circumstances, which do

not yet, and even in the future never may, exist. Else childhood and youth could scarcely ever reach to certainty. The child is certain of a mother's love, the boy is certain of his father's worth, the voter is certain of his party leader's political capacity and rectitude: would the certainty always bear the strain of widened experience, of larger knowledge? And yet it is none the less certainty, while it lasts: it is an assent to truth (real or apparent), based on arguments which appear sufficient at the time, and which do in fact exclude all reasonable doubt and fear.

The act of Faith, then, which Catholics elicit, whether in the doctrines of our religion, as a whole, or in distinct and separate doctrines, is eminently reasonable; for we are certain, to the exclusion of all deliberate and reasonable doubt, that God Himself has revealed the whole Deposit of Catholic Faith, and each and every of the dogmas contained in it.

And now it only remains for us to inquire:—

Can that assent of Faith ever become unreasonable? Can circumstances ever so change, the mind so expand, knowledge so broaden, intellectual difficulties so increase, that a Catholic may no longer be justified in believing some article of the Deposit or the whole Deposit which he had once believed, may reasonably deny or doubt that God has revealed it? The Vatican Council treats the question very clearly. In the "Constitution on the Catholic Faith," after explaining, as already quoted, that the Church is herself an unanswerable argument in favour of Catholicism, it goes on: "And hence, as 'a sign set up unto the nations,' she both draws those who do not yet believe, and makes her own children certain that the Faith which they profess rests on a most sure foundation". And it continues: "Our most merciful Lord both moves those in error by His grace, aiding

them that they may come to a knowledge of the truth, and strengthens by His grace those whom He has called out of darkness into His marvellous light, that they may continue in that light; for He never deserts them, unless deserted by them. And, therefore, the conditions are very different of those who, through the heavenly gift of Faith, have taken hold on Catholic truth, and of others who adopt a false religion through human reasoning. For those who accept the Faith, under the guidance of the Church, can never have sufficient grounds for changing their Faith, or even doubting it."[1] And in the corresponding Canon, already quoted: "If anyone shall say that the conditions are alike of the Faithful and of those who have not yet attained to the one true Faith, so that Catholics may have sufficient reason for suspending their assent, and calling in doubt the Faith which, under the Church's teaching, they have already embraced, until they have completed a scientific proof of the credibility and truth of their Faith, let him be anathema".[2] The Council, it will be noted, is dealing with the acceptance and rejection, not of particular dogmas but of the Catholic Faith as a whole; and it appears to make a distinction between those who have believed through the teaching of the Church and those who, for other reasons, admit Divine revelation. The former, it declares, can never have just cause for even doubting; of the latter it says nothing. And the reason of the distinction is easy to understand: if a man believe through the Church's teaching, because the Church testifies infallibly that God has revealed the whole Catholic Deposit, he can never reject or deliberately doubt the whole or any Article of that Deposit, without rejecting or doubting the Church's infallible authority. Now he never can be justified in

[1] Denz., 1794. [2] *Ibid.*, 1815.

this: for to do so lightly, or for reasons not carefully inquired into, would be clearly wrong; and the more thoroughly a man examines, without prejudice, the Catholic Church, her constitution, her history, and her attributes, the more plainly will he recognise her Divine origin and authority, and the less convincing will be any arguments which can be urged against her. Besides, as the Council notes, God's grace will be given to the inquirer; it must be his own fault, if he fails to co-operate with it. And, though the Council has not done so, we ourselves may extend this reasoning to all who in whatever way—through study, prayer, by special providential guidance—are led to profess the Catholic Faith: they can never have sufficient reason to reject or doubt it. We may hear it said at times that perverts from the Church allege honest conviction as their reason for going out from her. In general, we may treat the statement as utterly insincere. Perverts from Catholicism, unlike the converts of the early Church, and unlike so many converts from heresy in our own day, never make the sacrifice of worldly possessions. They may not "gain the whole world," but they almost always gain some portion of it, by their change of Faith. Let this be, however, as it may, the change is never justified. In almost every case, the pervert had believed because of a Divine revelation made known to him beyond reasonable doubt by the authority of the Church; and in such a case the Vatican Council has defined, as we have seen, that there never can be just cause for change. And in every case—whether Faith were due or not to the instructions of the Church—it was a firm belief in truth, as certainly revealed by God, and not to be called in doubt, not to be laid aside, without honest investigation and earnest prayer. And honest investigation and earnest prayer can never lead away from Catholic truth. We may be persuaded, there-

fore, that those who have once sincerely professed the Catholic Faith can never reject even one of its dogmas, still less the whole body of doctrines and the system of Catholicism, without grave culpability, without sinning against Divine light and leading.

To sum up: our Faith is reasonable, if we are certain that God has revealed what we believe. Our Faith is folly if we have not certainty. More than certainty we do not need. And we have certainty. We have it, if we will, through our own study of the records of revelation; we have it through the very existence of the Catholic Church, which bears witness to the Divine origin of her doctrines; we have it through the infallible teaching authority of the Church, which attests the fact and the extent of Divine revelation. Even the poorest and most ignorant can, and do, acquire this certainty. And, once obtained, it never can be lost, unless through the grave culpability of him who loses it.

LECTURE VI.

OUR FREEDOM IN AN ACT OF FAITH.

WE are to discuss in this lecture the freedom of an act of Divine Faith; but, before entering on the subject, it may be well to recall briefly some of the considerations on which we have already dwelt, and through which we have been led up to the question we are now to deal with.

We have seen, then, that an act of Divine Faith is an act of intellectual assent. The will, no doubt, has its part in an act of Faith; but the act itself is not an act of will. It is not trust or hope or love. It is knowledge, which rests on the authority of a Divine witness; it is an assent to truth, because the truth has been made known to us by God. And so the motive of Divine Faith is Divine testimony. We do not believe the doctrines of Faith because parents have so taught us, or the clergy preach them, or the Church vouches for them, or multitudes of men and women profess them, or even because many of them, apart from revelation, are demonstrably true. We may, indeed, assent to them for any or for all of these reasons; and, if we do, our assent will be reasonable and right. But it will not be an assent of Divine Faith. To be an act of faith, it must be based on testimony; to be an act of Divine Faith, it must rest on the testimony of God. And whatever God makes known to us must be believed. By the very fact of speaking to us He claims our assent. It matters nothing what it is that He reveals. Our obligation to believe is

not measured by the nature or importance of the truths which He makes known. They may be concerned with God Himself and His providence towards us, with facts of history or of science, with things which are plainly of vital consequence, or with others which appear trivial in themselves: if only God reveals them to us we may not reject or doubt them, or even withhold assent. But God must reveal the truths themselves: it is not enough that He should reveal other truths, premises, from which they may be inferred. And He must reveal them to me, Himself directly, or indirectly through the messengers whom He may send. I may not hold to be untrue or doubtful what I am certain He has said; but, if it be not said to me, it makes no claim on my positive assent. And hence the subject-matter of Divine and Catholic Faith is the body of revealed truths entrusted to the Apostles. Since Apostolic times there has been no Divine revelation intended for all mankind: no new truth of Faith has been or could be put forward by the Church, as binding on the belief of Catholics. And hence, too, private revelations, or those addressed to individuals, not intended for mankind generally, form no part of the Deposit of Faith; even though their genuineness should be proved by convincing evidence, and be admitted by the tribunals of the Church.

We have seen, further, that the Faith of Catholics, assent to the whole body of Divinely revealed truths, made known to the Apostolic Church, and handed on from generation to generation of Bishops and of Faithful united with the See of Rome, is supremely reasonable. For it cannot but be reasonable to believe what God has certainly revealed to us; and we are certain that God has revealed our Catholic Faith. We are certain of it, through our study of the records of revelation; we are certain of it through the very existence of the Catholic Church,

which bears continuous and convincing witness to the Divine origin of herself and of her doctrines; we are certain of it through the infallible teaching authority of the Church, which guarantees the fact and the extent of Divine revelation. We are certain, therefore, that God has revealed the whole body of doctrines, and each individual doctrine, which constitute the Catholic Faith.

We proceed now to inquire: Are we compelled to believe? And I do not speak of moral obligation: that is a question to be dealt with on another occasion. We are concerned at present with that form of compulsion which we call "physical necessity". Is the Catholic believer, when he assents to the dogmas of religion, because he knows for certain that they have been revealed to him by God, constrained by the laws of mind to yield assent? Or, does he exercise a real liberty of choice? Could he, if he would, withhold assent, or doubt, or deny? Is the act of Divine Faith free?

It may, of course, be objected, at the outset, that the inquiry is absurd: no act of the intellect can be free. Freedom is liberty of choice, and the intellect does not choose: it sees or apprehends, and it affirms or denies; while to choose is an act of will. We need not, however, discuss at any length this preliminary difficulty, and the psychological questions which it involves. It will be enough to say that the objection is well founded, in so far as it denies all freedom to the intellectual assents themselves. We can only speak of them as free, in so far as they are determined by free acts of will. Nor is it necessary here to show that our intellectual acts—our individual judgments, inferences, theories—are often influenced, and at times determined, by the will. There is no truer philosophy than that embodied in the phrase: "The wish is father to the thought". Our prejudices, dislikes, desires, too frequently colour, and sometimes

dictate, our views and opinions. It is in this sense, then, and in this sense only, that we speak of an act of Divine Faith as free: if it be free at all, the freedom is not in the act of intellect itself, but in some act of will, on which it depends.

Not, however, in the sense that I can elicit an act of Divine Faith, merely because I wish to believe. There can be no intellectual act without a motive which appeals to the intellect itself. I cannot assent to a proposition as true, unless there be present to my mind some reason for admitting its truth; and the mere wish on my own part, as on the part of another, that I should assent is no reason whatever for holding it to be true. The will may undoubtedly affect my appreciation of whatever reasons are put before me: but it cannot take the place of such reasons themselves. And this is peculiarly the case in an act of Faith. Faith, as we have seen, is knowledge based on the testimony of others. It is human faith if those who bear testimony are only men; it is Divine if the testimony is given by God. From the very nature of the act, then, I cannot believe, unless I know that God has spoken, that He bears witness to the truth of what is proposed for my belief. No effort of will can enable me to forego that Divine testimony in an act of Divine Faith.

But I may, if I so choose, refuse to consider the reasons for belief. Whatever their cogency, however vivid their presentation, I may, through willing it, decline to entertain them. If a man would argue with me, I need not listen; or, even while he speaks, I may occupy my mind with other matters; or I may hear his arguments, but dismiss them unconsidered. And, similarly, I may put revealed truth from me, may refuse to inquire into it, may become wholly engrossed by other interests, may neglect to weigh seriously the arguments which are advanced for it. I am free to do all this, both as regards

the whole body of Divinely revealed truths and each of its individual dogmas. I am under no physical compulsion to examine if God have revealed them. I can, if I will, pass by all the arguments which prove that He pledges His authority to me for their truth. And if, on the contrary, I choose to busy myself with revealed religion, if I satisfy myself that God is its author, if I gain the assurance that He testifies to its truth; and if, in consequence, I believe, then, to this extent at any rate, my Faith is free; for I freely choose to enter on the inquiry, and to understand the arguments, and to weigh them duly: so much of the process, so many of the steps, are free, which issue in my act of Faith.

This is not, however, the freedom of Faith with which we are concerned now. No one, I think, is disposed to doubt or question it. Indeed, the mental attitude of many among educated non-Catholics, whether heretics or wholly unbelievers, is sufficient proof that men are free to reject the Catholic Faith, by freely choosing to turn away from the claims and arguments which the Catholic Church addresses to them. How far religious error is due in fact to this cause, how far bodies of men or individual men may be responsible for the errors which they are thus led to persevere in, this is not the occasion to inquire. It is enough at present to note that a wide and sad experience attests this freedom—we may call it indirect or remote freedom—of the human mind to accept or to reject the truths of Divine Faith. But does it remain free, when all the arguments have been duly weighed? Is Divine Faith free, not only in the sense that I may refuse to take the steps which are absolutely necessary, before I can assent to the truths of revelation; but in this further sense, as well, that having freely taken them, I may still withhold assent, or may deliberately doubt or reject those truths? It is in this further sense

that we assert the freedom of our Faith: a freedom which, in contrast with the former, we may call immediate or direct.

When I make an act of Faith in the mystery of the Incarnation, I deliberately accept as true the statement that "the Word became flesh"; and I accept it on the testimony or authority of God. I can believe it, I ought to believe it, if it be quite certain that God Himself reveals it to me, and vouches for its truth; and, however incomprehensible the mystery may be, however apparently opposed to the remainder of our knowledge, no one, I conceive, would hesitate to assent to it, if he were convinced that God Himself stands sponsor for it. Now, we have already shown, when discussing the reasonableness of our Faith, that it is certain God reveals it. A study of the sacred Scriptures and of tradition, the existence of the Church, her infallible witness: these arguments in all their details, brought home in various ways to various minds, give complete moral certainty that God is the author of our religion, and that He testifies to the truth of all its doctrines. The whole Deposit of our Faith, therefore, is most certainly true: and there is abundant proof that it is God Himself Who has delivered it. We, therefore, and all men are bound to believe, when these proofs are brought home to us. Few, if any, we may feel assured, accept the proofs, and at the same time reject any of the doctrines. And yet those who believe, convinced by the proofs that God speaks to them, believe freely: might, if they would, doubt or disbelieve. I would not, of course, deny that God may speak so clearly, may select a manner of revelation so evidently Divine, that there is no possibility of deliberate doubt regarding the reality or meaning or character of the revelation. Has He ever done so? We have no certain grounds for either affirmation or denial. There

are Catholic writers who would have us think that St. Paul had such a revelation at Damascus, that Christ's Blessed Mother and His Apostles received such revelations from Christ Himself, that there have been some such private revelations in later times. That there may have been some such revelations is, of course, evident; that there have been such in fact, we have no proof. In any case, we are not called upon to deal at present with such exceptional instances: we are concerned with the Catholic revelation, as it is, and has been, proposed to mankind at large, and with Faith in it and in its particular doctrines, when men accept it.

Catholic revelation, then, as it comes home to the Catholic believer, when he examines carefully the grounds of his belief, enables him to elicit deliberately and prudently, and with a clear sense of moral obligation, his act of Faith. But it puts no physical compulsion on him. It does not come to him invested with any such absolute necessity as characterises mathematical truths, and first principles in mental science. He is still free, after all due reflection and examination, to withhold assent, and even to reject the revelation.

As we have explained and limited it, the Church has perhaps not formally defined this doctrine; but there can be no doubt that it is her authentic teaching. Thus the Council of Trent, when explaining the process of justification, tells us that adults "impelled and assisted by Divine Grace, and conceiving Faith by hearing, approach of their free accord to God, believing those things to be true which have been Divinely revealed and promised".[1] Their "approach towards God" is an act of Faith; and they are declared to make the approach of their own accord—"freely". The Vatican Council defines the act of

[1] Denz., 798.

Faith to be a "supernatural act, by which man yields freely obedience to Almighty God, consenting to and co-operating with His grace, which He might have resisted".[1] And, in the corresponding Canon: "If anyone shall say that the assent of Christian Faith is not free, but is produced necessarily by arguments of human reason: let him be anathema".[2] Now, it might be contended, and the contention seems highly reasonable, that we have in these extracts from two Ecumenical Councils a plain definition of Catholic doctrine. The Councils speak of the act of Faith itself, not of the process which leads up to it. They speak of a supernatural grace, consent to, co-operation with, which is an act of Faith. They say that the act, not the process, is freely elicited; that the consent is freely given; and the Vatican declares expressly that "the assent (or act) of Faith," not the preparatory acts which issue in it, is free, and not the necessary outcome of human reasoning. What clearer and more authoritative statement could we require of the Church's teaching?

This, too, is the express or implied teaching of the New Testament Scriptures, whenever they deal with the nature of an act of Faith. Consider, for instance, the words in which Our Lord sends forth the Apostles: "Go ye into the whole world and preach the Gospel to every creature . . . he that believeth not shall be condemned".[3] It is the unbelief itself which Our Lord blames. Even should a man listen to the Gospel, and weigh everything that can be put forward in its favour, if, through his own fault, he refuse to believe, he incurs the condemnation of which Christ warns him. His unbelief, therefore, is of his own free choice: a man is not condemned for omitting what he is not free to do. And, if his refusal

[1] Denz., 1791. [2] *Ibid.*, 1814. [3] Mark xvi. 15.

to believe be free, his act of belief, if he chooses to believe, must be free as well. No doubt a man may sin, and may incur the punishment due to his sin, if he turn away from the Gospel messenger, if he will not listen to the message; but it is not of such a sin Christ speaks, or, at least, not of it only. He speaks of all who culpably fail to believe, of those, therefore, also who are led to the very threshold of the Faith, and then refuse to accept it. He speaks of those who believe and of those who will not believe, as though the Gospel claims had been equally brought home to all of them; the former are to be rewarded, the latter to be punished: all therefore are equally free. Nor is any other idea conveyed by the Apostles themselves, when they discourse on Faith: they represent it always as a free acceptance of their message. They do not state in so many words that it is an intellectual assent, which the believer gives of his free choice to Divinely revealed truth, because he knows for certain that God, the Infallible Truth, has revealed it. But their whole language implies that the believer freely chooses to assent; that with all the reasons for assent before his mind, and while Divine grace impels him to assent, he may disbelieve, if he wills it. At the first Pentecost, St. Peter preached the Divinity of Christ so convincingly to the Jews that "they had compunction in their heart, and said to Peter and to the rest of the Apostles: What shall we do, men, brethren?"[1] In the discourse of the Apostle, confirmed, as it was, by the "miracle of tongues," the Jews had more than sufficient reason to believe; but Scripture implies that the reasons laid no constraint upon them, and that St. Peter was persuaded they laid none; for "with very many other words did he testify and exhort them, saying: Save yourselves from this perverse generation".[2] "And this is

[1] Acts ii. 37. [2] *Ibid.*, 40.

His Commandment," St. John writes in his First Epistle, "that we should believe in His Son, Jesus Christ."[1] When God commands we are free to obey and free to disobey; for God commands only what is dependent on our will. And "with the heart we believe unto justice," St. Paul writes to the Romans. ". . . But all do not obey the Gospel. For Isaias saith: 'Lord, who hath believed our report?'"[2] We believe the Gospel "with the heart"; for Faith is determined by the heart or will. We "obey the Gospel" when we believe; and there is no Christian obedience if we only believe because we must. Again and again we are warned of the Divine commandment to believe; again and again belief is represented to us as obedience to a Divine command;[3] both commandment and obedience are concerned directly with the act of belief itself: that act is, therefore, free. And, indeed, the whole tenour of the New Testament, not only isolated passages or selected texts, makes plain to us that Christ's teaching, the Christian revelation, is a body of religious doctrines made known to us by God Himself, authenticated by most certain marks of its Divine origin, and yet not forced upon the acceptance even of those who weigh its claims dispassionately and are convinced of its truth.

And such has been the interpretation which Catholic tradition has ever set on Holy Scripture. There is no need to multiply proofs. St. Augustine sums up, in a celebrated sentence, the whole mind and teaching of his own and later times, when he says: "A man may enter into a Church unwillingly, he may approach the Altar unwillingly, he may receive the Sacrament unwillingly; but no man can believe unless he wills it".[4] Every text-

[1] 1 John iii. 23. [2] Rom. x. 10, 16.
[3] Acts vi. 7; Rom. i. 5; 2 Cor. ix. 13, x. 5.
[4] In Joan., Tract. 26, n. 2; M.L. xxxv. 1607.

book of Catholic theology will give a long series of Fathers and theologians, all bearing witness to the same effect.

It might, no doubt, have been otherwise. God, had He so chosen, could have made His revelation so unmistakable, both as to its existence and its meaning, that no man could fail to recognise and to assent to it. It may be, as we have already stated, that He does so at times. But He has not chosen to do so, in the case of the Catholic, the Christian, revelation, as it is presented to mankind generally. It never has been, it never will be, presented to them so persuasively as it was by Christ Himself. The character of the Speaker, the beauty of His doctrine, the simplicity of His language, the wonders which He worked, all combined to win disciples for Him. The reasonableness and the duty of belief in Him and in His teaching were so plain that He Himself "upbraided the cities wherein were done the most of His miracles. . . . If in Tyre and Sidon had been wrought the miracles that have been wrought in you, they had long ago done penance in sackcloth and ashes."[1] And yet multitudes of those who looked upon Him, and listened to His discourses, and saw His miracles, refused to believe. Those who did believe were specially commended by Him. Some, like Peter at Cesarea Philippi, were specially rewarded; as though they, too, had they chosen, could have disbelieved. Nor is it anywhere hinted in the Gospels that, even in a solitary instance, compulsion was put upon His hearers, and their free will set aside. And if Christ's own preaching left men free, are we not justified in holding that the revelation which He preached has not been so made to mankind in general as to coerce any of them, and force them to believe? Divine Faith

[1] Matt. xi. 21.

is a gracious gift which God offers to us. We may accept or reject it, as we will.

And we are confirmed in this view by the fact that so many do reject it. I am not now referring to the case of Catholics brought up in the Catholic Church, and fully instructed in her doctrines, who not only come to disobey her laws, but assert that they have ceased to believe her teaching; for there are those who would have us think that no educated Catholic does ever lose the Faith, however lightly he may be led to speak of it. Nor do I refer to the uneducated poor, so many of whom have neither ability nor opportunity to weigh the chief arguments for Catholic belief, and to pass judgment upon them. I am thinking, rather, of cultivated intellects outside the Church, who have made a study of the Scriptures and of Church history, and are in a position to judge fairly of the claims which the Catholic Faith makes on them. There are many such, it will be admitted, who refuse to, and do not in fact, believe. I am not concerned, at present, with their responsibility in refusing. Whether they recognise or fail to recognise their obligation to believe, whether they sin or are without sin, in their refusal to believe, are questions foreign to our immediate purpose. In any case, they are clearly not compelled to embrace the Faith: they are free to accept or reject it as they choose.

For it is a law of the human mind that only evidence in the strictest sense can force it to assent. There are truths—of consciousness, for instance, and of mathematics—which, if we understand them rightly, and the proofs advanced for them, we must admit, whether we will or no. There are some such truths, also, which we hold on the mere authority of others: no ordinary person, I suppose, by any effort of will, can doubt or disbelieve that the American Continent exists, though he

himself has never seen it, and that a great European war is now in progress,[1] though he himself has seen nothing of the actual hostilities. But there are many other truths, truths which we are wholly certain of, and which put no such compulsion upon us. Some theories in physical science, some facts in past history, the identity and affection of our parents, the friendship of some amongst our friends, are instances in point. In these and like matters, we form decided judgments, we hold them without doubt or hesitation, we act on them, even when they involve considerable inconvenience and sacrifice. Yet, all the while, we are conscious that the judgment on which we act is not coerced by evidence; that we have abundantly sufficient proof for it, but might neglect that proof, or repudiate it, if we would. I have no reason to doubt the truthfulness of a friend; I have many and urgent reasons to feel assured of it: and yet, when I accept his statement and believe in it, I know that I could reject it: I exercise my freedom in believing him. It is to this second class of truths that the doctrines of our Faith belong.

When I assent by an act of Divine Faith to the doctrine of the Trinity, I do so because I am sure that God, "Who can neither deceive nor be deceived," has revealed it to me. Now I cannot doubt that, if God speaks to me—God infinitely perfect in knowledge and in truth—the statement which He makes is true. I can have no clearer or stricter evidence than I have of this. And if it were equally evident that God has revealed the doctrine of the Trinity, it would be impossible for me to doubt or disbelieve it. If I admit that a witness is truthful in the testimony which he gives, and admit that he vouches for a statement or a fact, I cannot doubt the

[1] Anno 1917.

truth of what he vouches for. But is it evident that God reveals the Trinity? I know He does, because the infallible Church tells me so; I know the Church to be infallible, because the Scriptures and tradition assure me that Christ, the God-Man, bestowed infallibility upon her. I know that Christ was God because that truth, too, is proved by Scripture and tradition. And I know that Scripture and tradition may be relied on, because I myself or others have demonstrated critically their authenticity and historic value. Or, I may set aside the witness of the Church, and go direct to Holy Scripture. I find there set forth, in the discourses of Our Lord and in the teaching of His Apostles, the doctrine in question; and again I trust the Scriptures, when they testify that Christ was God and that the Apostles were Divinely inspired teachers, because I am fully satisfied of the value of the Scriptures as historic documents. But, how many of all these things are evident to me? To how many of such statements am I driven to assent, whether I will or no? Let us suppose it to be evident that the Church does teach the doctrine of the Trinity, as revealed by God; but it is not evident that Scripture and tradition constitute authentic history; it is not evident from Scripture and tradition that Christ was God; it is not evident that Christ, admitting even He were God, bestowed infallibility upon His Church. It cannot, consequently, be evident that God reveals the mystery of the Trinity, or any other of the doctrines of our Faith. They are, indeed, certain; as is every step in the reasoning which leads up to them; but neither they themselves are strictly evident, nor are the various assents which precede and are essential to their certainty. I can doubt, if I will, the authenticity of Scripture; I can doubt the value of ecclesiastical tradition; I can doubt that Scripture and tradition prove clearly the

Divinity of Christ; I can doubt that Christ promised infallibility to His Church; the majority of the Faithful can doubt that the Church teaches the doctrine of the Trinity to be Divinely revealed: and if I can doubt the very foundations on which my belief in the Trinity is based, clearly I can doubt the doctrine itself. And, if I believe it, I must do so freely, of my own choice, not compelled by evidence, not driven by physical necessity; as we are driven by our acceptance of first principles of thought and of mathematical demonstrations.

Our Faith, then, is free, whether we assent to the Divine Deposit as a whole, or to its individual doctrines; we can doubt them, we can reject them. We hold them, indeed, with an absolute certainty; but yet, with a certainty which falls short of evidence, and which, in consequence, gives us liberty of choice and opportunity of merit.

LECTURE VII.

THE OBLIGATION TO BELIEVE: THE SIN OF UNBELIEF.

WE have just seen that our Faith is free; that, when we elicit an act of Divine Faith, we are not physically constrained by the evidence of revealed truth to assent to it, whether we will or no. God has not chosen to force Faith upon us. We must, indeed, acknowledge that God, infinitely wise and truthful, can speak to us only what is true; and were it evident that God reveals, or has revealed, to us the Deposit of Catholic Truth, we should be no more free to reject it, and no more free in our acceptance of it, than we are when we assent to the first principles of reason and to propositions in mathematics. It is not, however, evident that God reveals it. Whether He speaks to us through parents or other human teachers, or through the Holy Scriptures, or through the Catholic Church, He never speaks so unmistakably that we cannot, if we will, cast doubt on the identity of the Speaker; and, if we doubt that it is God Who speaks or has spoken, we cannot believe on the authority of God.

We are free, then, to believe or to disbelieve, even when the arguments for belief are all clearly before the mind: our Faith, therefore, when we believe, is not compulsory: it is an act of choice.

But is it free also, in the further sense that we are under no moral obligation to believe? There is no Divine or natural commandment that I am not physically free to violate; and yet I am morally obliged to

obey them all. Human freedom, therefore, is of two widely different kinds. There is a freedom from mere physical constraint, which takes no account of conscience and moral law: it differentiates the human race in many —indeed, in most—of its conscious acts from the brute creation: it implies, however, only liberty of choice, whether the choice be good or evil. And there is a freedom from the binding force of law itself, where choice is unfettered by command or prohibition. We are free, in the former sense, to observe and to violate the very decalogue; we are not free in the latter sense: for, as is obvious, we are bound by right reason and by conscience to obey it. It is of this second kind of freedom we are now to speak: and it is this freedom we deny to men in the domain of Faith, when we say that they are under a grave moral obligation to accept and to believe the truths revealed to them by God, and that deliberately to doubt or to reject them is to commit sin.

Of course, there is no question of little children here. From the very nature of their case, and until conscience wakes in them, and points out duty, they are incapable of sin or moral obligation. Nor is there question of those, even among adults, to whom Divinely revealed truth has never been made known: for such, it is impossible to believe; and there can be no sin, no moral shortcoming, in failing to overcome impossibilities. No doubt the problem of the many souls who live and die and hear nothing ever of any Divine revelation made to men is full of difficulty. But this is all we need say of it at present: no man will be held responsible, no man will be punished, for his unbelief, who has not wilfully put away the light from him, who has not wilfully refused the opportunity and the invitation to believe. There are others also who have received and hold only in part the doctrines of the Faith. They may have been

born into them, or they may have embraced them in later life; they may have accepted them without inquiry, or they may have been led into them by consultation and by study. At any rate, they now assent to them unhesitatingly, without any doubt or suspicion that they are a portion only of revealed truth, mingled probably with many errors. We Catholics have no wish, we have no anxiety to deny that there may be, and we earnestly hope there are, multitudes of Christian believers without the Church who are in this position. Born in religious error, educated in religious error, surrounded by heresy, habituated to regard Catholicism and the Catholic Church as unscriptural and superstitious, they yet cling to many Catholic doctrines, and entertain no misgivings about the rightfulness or the security of their own state. What is wanting in their creed has never been set before them as revealed: they are, as regards it, like the unbelievers to whom revelation has never been made known. With none of these, then, the little children, and the honest unbelievers, whether their unbelief be partial or complete, are we concerned now: we are to consider the case of those only to whose attention and knowledge the claims of revelation have been made manifest, and who have deliberately neglected or refused to submit to them.

As we have already noted, a man may reject revelation wilfully, or wilfully withhold assent from it, in one or other of two ways. He may consider the arguments which go to show that God has spoken, and, having seen their force, may choose to disbelieve; since it is certainty, not evidence, they offer him. Or he may refuse to consider any arguments at all, may choose to put aside the question altogether. The two positions, it is clear, are different; but both are alike in this that both involve a violation of the moral law; both are at variance with

grave moral obligations. Let us begin by examining the former.

Such a man, then, has had his attention directed to the fact and claims of a Divine revelation. He knows, beyond all possibility of doubt, that if God, infinitely wise and truthful, makes a revelation, the revelation must be true; and he is certain, from the arguments which have been laid before him, that God has really spoken, has really revealed the doctrines which constitute the Deposit of Catholic Faith. He is bound, in consequence, to accept these doctrines; if he reject them, or even withhold assent from them, he violates the moral law. "Who is ignorant, or can be ignorant," wrote Pius IX, "that we must believe unhesitatingly when God speaks to us, and that nothing is more in accord with reason itself than to assent and hold fast to those things which it is certain have been revealed by God, Who can neither deceive nor be deceived?"[1] And the Vatican Council, in its "Dogmatic Constitution on the Catholic Faith," after defining the existence of a Divine revelation, goes on to declare that, "since man depends wholly upon God, as upon his Creator and his Lord, and since created reason must be wholly subject to the Uncreated Truth, we are bound to render entire homage of intellect and will by Faith to God, when He makes a revelation to us".[2] Which is only stating in general terms the solemn profession of the Athanasian Creed, a Creed that, since the fifth century, has been the mark and test of true believers in the Unity and Trinity of God, in the Incarnation, the Redemption, the Resurrection, and in the eternal blessedness or misery of mankind: "Whoever wishes to be saved," it says, "must, before all things, hold the Catholic Faith: which, unless a man maintain whole and inviolate, he shall with-

[1] Encycl., Qui pluribus—Denz., 1637. [2] *Ibid.*, 1789.

out doubt perish eternally."[1] And it concludes: "This is the Catholic Faith, which, unless a man believe faithfully and firmly, he cannot be saved". But, indeed, there is no need to cite particular definitions or declarations of the Church. The whole course of her history, her treatment of heresy and of heretics, the decrees and anathemas and symbols of her Councils: all prove clearly the supreme value she has ever set on purity of Faith, and her conviction that all men are bound to accept and believe the whole Deposit.

Nor could she act and teach otherwise, in view of the plain language which Our Lord Himself used. "Go ye into the whole world," He says to the Apostles, "and preach the Gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptised shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be condemned."[2] This is their Divine commission: to preach the full Gospel of Christ, which is the whole Deposit of Faith, to every soul of man. A message is entrusted to them; and they are bidden deliver it to all mankind. Whosoever receives that message, and acts on it, is to attain salvation: whoever culpably rejects it is to be shut out from heaven. Could Our Lord express more clearly and more emphatically the obligation all men are under to whom the message comes of listening to the messenger and of accepting his message? Could any moral obligation be more binding than one imposed on us under sanction of eternal punishment? And, consider St. Paul's exposition of the need of Faith, in his Epistle to the Hebrews. "My just man liveth by Faith,"[3] he writes to them; and after defining and exemplifying the Faith of which he writes, he goes on: "And without Faith it is impossible to please God. For he that cometh to God must believe that He is and

[1] Denz., 39. [2] Mark xvi. 15. [3] Heb. x. 38.

is a rewarder to them that seek Him." Faith is the very basis of justification. For "he that is unbelieving, his soul shall not be right in himself," we read in the Prophet Habacue,[1] from whom St. Paul is quoting. And so, if any man "will come to God," will approach to God in His kingdom upon earth or in heaven, will live the life of grace here or of blessedness hereafter, he must believe what God reveals to him, must accept the whole message which God sends. For we have to remember that St. Paul is pleading for Faith, not in particular dogmas, nor in cases only like those to which he refers: he is commending Faith in Christ, in "Jesus the author and finisher of Faith," and in the Gospel or Revelation of Christ, whose Apostle or messenger he was. Indeed, the whole public life of Our Lord, His institution of a Church and His commission to the Apostles, are unintelligible, if we should suppose men under no moral obligation to accept His doctrines. As though Eternal Wisdom had become man, and had made a revelation to mankind, had founded a society to preserve and propagate His teaching, and had sent forth preachers to the ends of the earth to make it known; and yet left men wholly free to deny or doubt the truth of what He had revealed and commanded to be taught.

No wonder there is such an absolute consensus of the Fathers as to the necessity and obligation of belief. They preach the Faith; and they impress upon their hearers the duty of accepting it. They condemn heresy; and they warn their hearers of its fatal consequences to those who share in it. They emphasise the unity of the Church; and they deplore the condition of those outside it. No other such evil, they insist, can befall a man as the rejection or the loss of Faith.

[1] Hab. ii. 4.

For no man can be justified in rejecting truth. He is not always called on to profess it; he is not always bound to inquire into it. But, when it is brought clearly home to him, it is immoral to reject it. And this is particularly the case when truth involves man's highest interests; as does the revelation made to us by Christ. I do not mean that all the doctrines of the Divine Deposit appear to be of equal consequence for the conduct of Christian life: though we should find it difficult to point out any, and maintain with any show of reason that they are trivial and unimportant. Even the mystery of the Holy Trinity and the Immaculate Conception of Our Blessed Lady may have far-reaching practical results. But our whole Catholic life is built on revealed doctrines; on the Divinity of Christ, the infallibility of His Church, the authority of His Episcopate, the efficacy of His Sacraments and Sacrifice, the inspiration of Holy Scripture, the immortality of the soul, a future of rewards or punishment. These, in their many details, and other kindred doctrines, are not abstract speculations only; they colour and mould man's life, if he really believes in them; and, therefore, if he knows them to be true, he is bound to believe. Besides—and this consideration applies equally to every statement which God reveals to us—He claims our assent, whensoever He speaks. Why should He make a revelation unless to convey to us knowledge, for whose truth He pledges His Divine authority? And can He speak to us, and pledge His authority for the truth of what He says, and yet regard with indifference our dissent, or doubt, or our refusal to believe? When we converse with one another, when we assume responsibility ourselves for the statements which we make, we make them to be believed; we challenge the assent of those to whom we make them; and we feel aggrieved and affronted, if they are called in question or

denied. Yet our knowledge may be imperfect; and it may be that we express incorrectly what we know. Similarly, when God, Infallible Wisdom and Truth, speaks clearly to us, He, too, speaks to be believed. We can only doubt or deny or even withhold belief, by questioning His wisdom or His truth, or by repudiating His right to make a claim on our assent. And so it is men dishonour and disobey Him by every form of unbelief.

We may pause here to reflect that the whole revelation of God is in the keeping of the Catholic Church. Divine Faith is belief in her teaching of the Deposit as a whole, and of each and every one of the doctrines contained in it. The moral obligation to believe in Divine revelation is the obligation to believe in whatsoever the Catholic Church teaches to be contained in the Deposit of Divine Faith.

But there are many to whom this obligation is unknown. There are many who have heard nothing of any Divine revelation. There are many who have neither doubt nor misgiving about the truth of the religious errors in which they are involved. Pagan multitudes have lived and died, to none of whom has even the suspicion ever come that God has spoken with mankind, more particularly through Christ, His Son. There must be multitudes in heresy—born, brought up, living and dying in their false beliefs, who have a firm conviction of the truth of their religion, and would hold it sin deliberately to doubt their Church's claims, or inquire into the claims of any other: they are wholly satisfied that theirs is the one perfect revelation which God has made. Such persons, it is clear from what we have already seen, cannot believe the Christian revelation in its entirety: the former, indeed, cannot believe any part of it at all. But no obligation has been intimated to them; they

violate none by their unbelief. They do, indeed, incur most hurtful consequences; but these consequences are not a penalty. It is a grievous evil to be shut out even inculpably from Divine Faith; it is a grievous evil to be infected even inculpably with heretical opinions; it is a grievous evil to be even inculpably without the visible communion of God's one true Church. We may discuss these evils on some other opportunity: at present we need only say that they are not punishments inflicted for disobedience to a Divine command. Even an earthly ruler, when he is wise and just, commands nothing in which his subjects are unable to obey.

But what of those to whom Divine truth is offered, whose attention has been directed to its claims and who experience a feeling of anxiety or doubt as to the soundness and safety of their own position? They are unbelievers: for instance, atheists, pagans, Jews; or they are members of some religious Christian sect which accepts a part of the Catholic Faith, while it denies or doubts the rest; and misgivings have arisen in their minds, or have been suggested to them, lest the fullness of truth should lie elsewhere, and they themselves should be in error. That they cannot accept the Catholic Faith in such a state of doubt is clear; for Divine Faith is assent to revealed truths, which the intellect holds for certain. But ought they, are they bound, to inquire? There are doubts and anxieties which are trivial, indeliberate, passing, which are recognised to rest on no reasonable foundation. No one can be bound to inquire because of them. They may come, they do come, to Catholics themselves. And there are doubts and anxieties of a more serious kind, more frequently recurring, based on more solid grounds, unsettling one's hold upon truths which had previously appeared secure, creating a condition of grave perplexity and restlessness.

Even then a Catholic, if such a state is possible in Catholics, may not deliberately doubt, or enter upon inquiry with what is called "an open mind". But followers of other creeds or of no creed at all are under a pressing moral obligation to inquire; for man's intellect is made for truth, and the more precious truth is, the more direct and important its influence on life and moral conduct, the greater and more urgent is man's obligation to seek it out and hold fast to it. Now, if there be a revealed religion; if God has really spoken to mankind, has taught them much about Himself, and His providential dealings with them, has destined them for a heaven to be won by their obedience to His law and their co-operation with His grace, has founded a society to which He has entrusted the whole body of His teaching and the chief channels of His grace, has commanded that society to promulgate, and promulgate infallibly, the Divine and moral law, has bidden men to become members of it, that they may find holiness on earth and happiness in heaven: then, surely, it is a matter of vital importance for a man to discover that revealed religion and embrace it? If he have reasonable grounds for thinking it exists, if a religious system be offered for his examination, which claims to be that revelation, if he have grave motives for believing that his own religious position is insecure, and that a good deal can be said in favour of Catholicism, then surely he owes it to himself and to God to make earnest and serious inquiry? If a man can be ever bound to face an investigation, because of the consequences it may involve, it would seem that he must be bound here, where his highest interests in time and through eternity are at stake. Then, further, a reverence for God, even for a God whose existence is not yet known with an entire certainty, demands the investigation. I am told that God, my Creator and Lord, would

speak with me, that He has, in fact, already spoken, has sent His messengers with all-important communications to me. There come to me persons who claim to be such messengers, who assure me they bring such communications to me, and who invite me to examine into the reality of their credentials. There is nothing prima facie absurd or improbable in the statement which they make; I am not without some reasonable grounds for thinking that their statement may be true; if true, it must vitally affect my life both here and hereafter. Am I not bound to look into their claim, to examine if it be really the case that God has sent them, and that they bring a Divine message to me? Do I not offer insult to God, if, in the circumstances, I neglect or refuse inquiry? And this is the position of the unbeliever or the heretic, who has been brought to a knowledge of the Catholic Faith, of the claim it makes to be a Divine revelation, and of the reasons which even at first sight make it probable that the claim is true. It is possible, nay, probable, that his Creator is addressing him; if so, it is certain to be on matters of high interest both to God and man. Whether it be so or not can be easily determined. Is it not, therefore, plain that in neglecting or refusing to inquire he offers insult and does injury to the Almighty? A son is not only bound to obey his father's will, when it is made clearly and expressly known to him; he is bound to seek after it and discover it, if he may, when he has reasonable grounds for believing that it has been formulated and transmitted to him.

Man is, therefore, bound to believe what he is certain God reveals to him; and he is bound to inquire, if doubtful, whether a revelation has been made to him or not. Should man neglect these duties, he sins against himself and God. It may seem unnecessary to dwell upon the point at any length. If man be really bound to believe

what God reveals to him; if he be bound, moreover, to inquire, when revelation seems to him uncertain or obscure, then he sins when he refuses to believe or to inquire. No other proof is really necessary. For what is sin but the violation of a Divine command, the refusal to fulfil an obligation which God or nature has laid upon us? But there are certain considerations connected with this portion of our subject on which we may briefly dwell anew, for the purpose of developing and emphasising them.

It is not uncommon to meet with men and women who deny, or call in question the sinfulness of unbelief: men and women even who admit the existence of a personal God, and the fact that He has made a revelation to mankind. The revelation, they say, is too uncertain and too vague to impose an obligation of belief; or, granting that we can learn for certain what the revelation is, it can matter nothing to the Almighty whether we believe in it or not. We have besides, no power to control our intellectual convictions; and we find, in simple fact, that we are unable to believe. I do not think it can be necessary here to discuss in any detail objections such as these. For we have seen that the Catholic Faith is wholly reasonable: that, however mysterious many of its doctrines are, they come to us on such high authority, and are so certainly revealed, that no other truths can make an equal claim upon us. We have seen that God in fact does insist on our assent: He has laid on us a commandment to believe. He could not, indeed, make a revelation to us, yet leave us free of obligation to give credence to it. And, finally, we have seen that by far the greater number of our judgments and opinions are determined by our will; that we cannot, of course, elicit an intellectual assent, merely because we will it however earnestly; but that, where truth is certain, yet does not compel

assent, the will can influence the judgment, can decide it to assent or to dissent, as the will itself may freely determine. The truths of our Catholic Faith, we have also seen, are of this kind: they put no compulsion on the intellect, even when understood most fully and most clearly; but they are certain, beyond all reasonable doubt; and the intellect may and should be determined by the will to accept and hold them.

And hence arises the sinfulness of unbelief. Man is under grave moral obligation to believe; he sins if he neglects, or refuses to fulfil, that obligation. "He who believeth not shall be condemned," Our Lord says: and there is no condemnation to eternal misery unless in punishment of sin. "Without Faith it is impossible to please God. . . . He who would approach to God must believe that He is, and that He is the rewarder of those who seek Him,"[1] St. Paul writes: and we are bound under pain of sin to please God and to approach to Him. And again, he writes to Timothy: "Having Faith and a good conscience; which some rejecting have made shipwreck concerning the Faith; of whom is Hymeneus and Alexander, whom I have delivered up to Satan, that they may learn not to blaspheme".[2] They are not delivered up to Satan for a sinless rejection of the Faith; and the gravity of their sin, in the estimation of St. Paul, is expressed by his comparing it to the sin of blasphemy.

Nor is it difficult to understand why a rejection of the Faith, a refusal to accept the whole body of Divinely revealed truths, or a rejection of any individual doctrine contained amongst them, should be reputed sinful, should be held to be amongst the gravest sins of which men are guilty. Divine Faith is essential to salvation. In God's present providence no man is saved eternally who has

[1] Heb. xi. 6. [2] 1 Tim. i. 19.

reached adult years, and has not made an act or acts of that Divine Faith which St. Paul describes to the Hebrews. To make such acts he must believe, on the infallible authority of God, truths which have been certainly, not evidently, revealed to him. Now, if he reject even one such truth, knowing it to be certainly revealed of God, it is difficult to see how he can, on the same Divine authority, accept and believe any others. In the case of human witnesses, of finite knowledge and of finite truthfulness, we may believe some statements on their authority, while refusing, and perhaps prudently refusing, to accept others, which in themselves appear more incredible. We can do so, because the witnesses' authority is finite; it may warrant us in trusting them within certain limits, and not beyond them. But where the authority is infinite, it is equally to be relied on, whatever may be the doctrine that has been revealed. If I set it aside in one case, there seems no reason why I should bow to it in any other. If I will not believe in the mystery of the Trinity, though I know that Christ revealed it, am I at all likely to believe in the unity of God, or in any other doctrine of our Faith, on Christ's authority? It may perhaps be possible; since each individual act of Faith is free; but is it likely? If I fail, however inculpably, to believe those things of which St. Paul makes special mention, I close heaven's gates against me; and if I fail in any instance through my own fault, through a wilful rejection of the Divine authority, shall my failure and my fault be sinless?

Besides, an act of deliberate doubt or disbelief, even the refusal to inquire, is a grievous insult to the majesty of God. It cannot, therefore, but be a sin: for what do we understand by sin unless a deliberate rejection of a Divine claim, a deliberate insult offered to the Divine Majesty? Let us suppose that we ourselves send a

message to a friend, through channels which we select so carefully and supply with such credentials as to make it absolutely certain that the message is from us. I assure my friend that the message is of great importance; I beg of him to receive it on my authority, which I pledge to him for its truth; I urge him to act upon it, when it has been made known to him; and I warn him of the grave consequences which will follow on his refusal or neglect of it. The message may fail to reach him; and if it do fail, without fault of his, I have no grievance, can entertain no resentment against him. But, if it do reach him, if it challenge his attention, if it leave him no colourable excuse for refusing to accept it; and, if he do refuse, or will not even listen, or pleads a doubt as to its genuineness, a doubt which he takes no pains to clear away or verify, does he not treat me with disrespect? Does he not put a grave affront upon me? And, if he should be a child or a dependent, if he be indebted to me for many favours, if my claims upon him are many and overwhelming: does not his offence against me become more grievous still? No one, I think, will deny that, in such a case, I may well conceive displeasure, and may justly feel that wrong and dishonour have been done me. Now, apply all this to God, and to the revealed message which God sends us. Is it not plain that coming, as it does with so many and so weighty guarantees of authenticity, conversant as it is with such momentous matters, purporting to come from God, to Whom we owe everything: is it not plain, if we disregard or reject it, that we slight Almighty God, and, therefore, sin against Him?

And we are to bear in mind that the infinite dignity of God gives a special heinousness to unbelief, which sets it in a category by itself. The dignity of a witness, other than that which arises from his knowledge and

veracity, is no sufficient reason for believing the testimony which he gives. I cannot accept a statement as true, merely because it has been made by parents, by superiors, or by friends. I can only trust their testimony, when I am persuaded that they are well informed of the matters in which they testify, and truthful in testifying to what they know. If we conceive even of God as Creator and Lord, with every Divine attribute except wisdom and veracity, we do not yet conceive of Him as a witness worthy of belief. I cannot believe because an eternal infinite Creator, who may deceive me, or Himself may be deceived, commands me to believe. But, given knowledge and truthfulness in a witness, the greater his dignity from other sources, the greater will be our obligation to believe him. Because God is truth, I can assent to what He tells me; because He is Creator, Teacher, Lord, and Father, I am bound, when He bids me, to assent to it and to obey. And it is because His authority over us is so exalted, because His claims on our obedience as Creator, Teacher, Lord and Father, are infinite, that unbelief, a refusal to listen to His message, to acknowledge its Divine character, to hold it firmly as true, is so terrible a sin against Him.

In all these considerations, as has been remarked already, there has been no question of men and women to whose notice Divine revelation has been never brought, nor of those who hold honestly that they are not called on to examine into it, nor finally of those who, for whatever cause, remain unconvinced that God has spoken to them. While such conditions last, they can make no act of Divine Faith; they are bound to none. But there are others: some who turn away from the Divine message; some who will not be convinced that God has spoken; others, again, who simply will not make an act of Faith in what they acknowledge God to have revealed.

And of all these we have said, and we have seen, that they are under a grave obligation to listen, to inquire, and to assent. If they fail culpably to fulfil the obligation, they sin grievously; and the sin, if persevered in, will shut them out from heaven: "He who believeth not shall be condemned".[1]

[1] Mark xvi. 16.

LECTURE VIII.

THE CONDITION OF HONEST UNBELIEVERS.

WE are to discuss now the spiritual condition of the multitudes of men and women who come short of holding the Deposit of Faith in its fullness; who either have no share whatever in it, or else hold it in some one of the many mutilated forms which prevail among the Christian sects. And we are not concerned with those who come short, through their own fault. We have considered their case already; and we have seen that, whether they turn a deaf ear to the Divine Message, or unreasonably reject its proofs, or dissent from the truths themselves which they acknowledge to have been revealed; whether they simply withhold assent, or positively disbelieve, or entertain doubts which they deliberately neglect to clear away: they each and all disobey a Divine command, violate a most serious obligation, and sin grievously against God. Nor is there any need to dwell on the case of less well-instructed Catholics, who may be ignorant of many individual dogmas of revealed religion, and may hold doctrines to be revealed which are not revealed, which may be sometimes even false or superstitious. It is an evil, of course, to be ignorant of any truth contained in Divine revelation: for we cannot conceive of God as revealing any truth which is wholly useless for us to learn. It may be more hurtful still to believe in doctrines, and attribute to them a religious value, when they are mere human inventions,

foolish at times, or worse than foolish. And hence the urgent duty of Bishops and of priests: "I charge thee," St. Paul writes to Timothy, "before God and Jesus Christ, Who shall judge the living and the dead, by His coming and His kingdom. Preach the word; be instant in season and out of season."[1] The most pressing obligation of the Apostle, and of an Apostle's successor, is to announce the Gospel of Christ, to teach the whole Deposit of Divine Faith. No doubt, while it is all equally true, it is not all equally important, not all equally necessary in explicit and direct belief. But the Apostolic commission extends to all: an Apostle is to teach "all things whatsoever I have commanded you"; and the Bishop is to see to it that, so far as may be, every member of his flock is taught all the doctrines which God has revealed for all of them. I say "so far as may be": for it is clear that the teaching must be accommodated to circumstances and persons; and it is clear, too, that no one, however earnest and gifted, can hope to gain an explicit knowledge of all the truths that are contained in Divine revelation. But even the least instructed of Catholics, if he have received any religious instruction at all, and if he live in visible communion with the Church, however defective his instruction may have been, and whatever errors may be mingled with it, is practically free from most of the disadvantages which attach to those outside the Church, and which it is our present purpose to examine into. We hear a good deal sometimes about the religious ignorance and religious errors of the peasantry of Spain and Italy, and of some among our Catholic poor in Ireland. The charge in general is gross exaggeration. But, even granting it were fairly accurate, it would still be true that the religious condition of such

[1] 2 Tim. iv. 1.

Catholics is far more satisfactory, their Faith more conducive to holiness and salvation, than anything which Bible religion and private judgment can offer to non-Catholics. We need not dwell further on the point at present: it will appear, I think, clearly, as we proceed in the discussion of our subject.

We are to consider, then, the case of those without the Church, who, through no sin or fault of their own, believe a part only of revealed truth, or believe nothing of it whatsoever. Can their state be regarded by us a hopeful one? Or, ought we to be anxious and apprehensive about their present and their future spiritual welfare?

And, first, if they be total unbelievers, they are, and must continue, while their unbelief endures, wholly outside the way of salvation. They may have many natural virtues. They may be gentle and courteous, brave, generous, just, truthful, and chaste. They may be singularly attractive, and may set a high example in all the affairs of municipal and social life. But the "just man liveth by Faith". If unbaptised, they possess no supernatural virtue, they can gain no merit which will lead to heaven. There is, of course, no such thing as wholly pagan character amongst us: no man escapes the influences of the Christian Faith; we are all brought up and live in an atmosphere created by the Christian religion. But we meet with men and women sometimes who disclaim all belief in it, and who deny the need of it for lives of the highest moral excellence. We meet with Catholics, though it may be rarely, who point to such lives as exemplary, and contrast them with the lives of men and women who profess the Catholic Faith and are members of the Church of Christ. Now moral excellence does not lie in the mere externals of life: it is a thing of the heart and will. And there is something far higher and more necessary than an "exemplary" life; there is the life of

grace, and death in grace, which no man can achieve unless through Faith in Divine revelation. Civilisation, temperament, educational influences, family and social surroundings, may combine to produce a type of character which, in outward appearance, and in exceptional instances, is scarcely to be distinguished from the best amongst believers. But such a life does not rise, of itself, and even at its best, above the mere level of nature. Its aims, motives, energies, will be purely natural. And, while it may win men's admiration, and be held up to them to copy, it is of no supernatural value, helps nothing towards the real purpose for which life is given to us. Better share the present state and future hopes of the least instructed and most sinful among Catholics, among those who hold all Christ's Faith and are members of His Church, than be numbered with the choicest and most perfect patterns of paganism.

The case is very different with those who accept the fundamental principles of Faith, and believe some portion of the revealed Deposit. We can scarcely doubt that many members of separated religious bodies believe whole-heartedly in revelation, admit the authority of Holy Scripture, receive unhesitatingly the truths—many of them most important—which they find there, and entertain no serious deliberate misgiving as to the rightfulness of their own religious position. We Catholics assuredly hope and pray that there may be very many such persons amongst those outside the Church. For they can exercise the Faith which is necessary for salvation: they can believe whatever Divinely revealed truths they do hold, on the Divine authority. I know, of course, that they run risk of missing Divine Faith altogether, even when believing the most vital truths of revelation. The Unity and Trinity of God, the Death and Resurrection of Our Saviour, the eternal rewards of

a life of holiness: these and other similar doctrines they may hold, as having heard them from parents, or read them in the Bible, or learned them from sermons and catechetical instructions, or observed that they were held by all their co-religionists. And, if they advance no further, if they do not expressly hold them as revealed by God, on God's authority, their Faith is not Divine, is not that Faith which is essential to salvation. It is not, of course, for us to hazard an opinion as to how far this danger is successfully met outside the Church. It is a danger, as we have already noted, even amongst ourselves. It is a far greater danger without, in Protestantism, where the tendency is marked towards believing on the authority of the Bible; and in the Greek and Russian Churches, where the Bible is replaced by ecclesiastical traditions. There is the possibility, even the likelihood, that revealed truths will be received, but not on God's authority; and, unless God's authority be the motive of assent, the reason for believing, there can be no act of Divine Faith whatsoever. Yet the condition of individuals and of populations which are given over to material heresy, which hold, that is, inculpably, a mutilated Faith, is far more hopeful than that of total unbelievers. Heretics, as we know them, and as we gladly observe, have preserved portions of revealed truth. They still possess some channels of grace. They are earnest often in the practice of Christian virtues. They are actuated by religious motives. In the Greek and Russian Churches they have the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, the same seven Sacraments as ourselves. Where Baptism is carefully administered, children are received into membership of Christ's one true Church: they can never leave it, unless by their own voluntary decision. Many die in childhood, and pass from apparent heresy into heaven. Many others live on, in ignorance of their

errors, receiving all the necessary graces to avoid sin, to repent of it, to follow after virtue, to love God, and to persevere finally. We shall never know, until the great accounting day, how many and how great are the Divine mercies to multitudes outside the Church's visible communion, who believe some portion of her teaching and live according to it; while they honestly, and often as a matter of religious duty, reject her authority.

And yet there are serious grounds for anxiety, when we consider the state of heretics, of those, even, whose heresy is material only, who deny revealed doctrines, but not through fault or sin for which they themselves can be held responsible. We have already noted that there is danger they may believe the truths which they believe for human motives only, taking no account of Divine revelation. Further, the doctrines they reject are often of the greatest value in moulding and fashioning religious and moral character. Unitarians deny the Divinity of Christ: they must adjust their whole scheme of Redemption to the denial. Their whole attitude towards Christ must be widely different from ours; they cannot love, worship, appeal to Him as we do. It means the loss of Christianity, and of all that is most precious in Christian Faith and practice; even when the positive tenets of Unitarianism are received—if they ever are received—on the Divine authority. Protestantism rejects the cultus and the invocation of the Saints: it fears, in consequence, to encourage familiarity with their history; it must forbid recourse to their intercession; it shuts out the advantages which would arise from their example and their patronage. Worse still, the Faith of partial believers is generally ill-assured and uncertain. For it must depend on private judgment; and private judgment at the best, in the high matters of revealed religion, is a very fallible guide and teacher. I ask a

non-Catholic, of whatever Communion he may chance to be, why he believes in the fundamental doctrines of his Faith: the existence of God and the Divinity of Christ. If he be well instructed, he will answer: "Because God, the infallible Truth, has revealed them". "How does he know for certain," I continue, "that God has really revealed them?" "They are contained," he will reply, "in the inspired Scriptures of the New Testament." "But how is he sure," I go on, "that they are contained in Scripture, and how is he sure that Scripture is inspired?" "They are contained in Scripture," he says, "because such is the plain meaning of many individual passages and of the whole context of the Bible. And Scripture is inspired, because its teachings are so sublime, and affect the earnest reader with such a supernatural sense and savour." "The Unitarians, Socinians, and many others," I rejoin, "are earnest students of the New Testament: the Divinity of Christ, they tell me, lies nowhere within its pages. There are many honest readers of the Bible who perceive nothing of that supernatural sense and savour of which you tell me." What defence can he make further? What can he do more than oppose his own judgment on the inspiration and meaning of the Scriptures to the judgment of many others as well qualified to judge correctly as himself? And what is this, except it be to hold the reality and truth of Christ's Divinity, and of every other doctrine which he claims to be revealed, as a mere private opinion, resting on his own private judgment, and contradicted by multitudes of other men, of whose ability and impartiality he entertains no question? How can he be certain that he, not they, is in possession of the truth? He may, indeed, appeal to the consensus of those who think as he does; he may invoke the continuous tradition of the Christian Church. But, if he do, he sacrifices his claim to be a

Bible Christian; he draws his religion from other sources than the Bible. And he merely puts off, he does not solve, his difficulties. Why should he accept, why should he lean on, the religious views of his co-religionists? Why should he give any preference to them over those which contradict them? He must be driven in the end to vindicate his action, to justify his reading of tradition, his views of the present doctrines of his Church, and of the value to be given them, by his confidence in his own reasoning, by setting his own private judgment against the judgment of all who differ from him.

Nay, more, the partial unbeliever's Faith, even when Divine, is ill-secured in this further sense: its hold on him is necessarily precarious. It rests ultimately on private judgment; and it must, therefore, be unstable. He reads his Bible, and forms his religious creed from it; or he studies Church history as well, and builds up for himself a system which he calls "Biblical and Historic Christianity"; or he examines the sect of which he is a member, and approves the essential doctrines required for its membership. But he may judge differently to-morrow. He may see reason to interpret differently the Scripture texts; he may acquire a wider, clearer knowledge of Church history; he may understand better the very formulas of his own Communion. And if any or all of these things happen, why should he cling any longer to his past opinions? Why should not he modify them, in the light of his deeper and more accurate attainments? Why should not his errors of yesterday become his religious dogmas of to-day? He has the same right to judge for himself to-day that he had yesterday; and, as time goes on, he has more and better data out of which to construct his religion.

It can be scarcely necessary, I think, to remark that nothing of all this is applicable to Catholics. We believe

in the Divinity of Christ, because God reveals it. We believe that God reveals it, on the authority of Holy Scripture, of a continuous ecclesiastical tradition, and of the living teaching Church, which infallibly interprets to us both Scripture and tradition. And, if asked further, on what we ground our theory of the Church's infallibility in teaching, we answer: on the promise of Christ our Lord, when founding her, on the plain words of the Gospels, on the teaching of the Apostles, on the clear and emphatic testimony of the Christian Society, throughout all its history. We, too, have to trust to private judgment; but only until it leads us to the threshold of the Church, to an acceptance of her Divine authority. Thenceforward we can know infallibly, on that authority, what God has taught; whether the doctrines that He reveals are found in tradition only, or in Scripture and tradition. The non-Catholic must appeal to private judgment for every dogma he believes in; there is no living teacher who can tell him certainly what God has spoken. Private judgment, under the influence of grace, guides us, Catholics, to the living teacher; having found her, we believe absolutely in all she teaches.

But it is not only because of the uncertainty of their Faith, and its liability to change, that partial believers in Divinely revealed truth, who are without the Church, are at a grave disadvantage. There are many Catholic privileges and graces which, however honest their disbelief may be, are withheld from them.

They have no membership in the visible Church of Christ. Catholics, too, through ignorance or error, may fall short, in varying degrees, of the fullness of Divine Faith. No one, indeed, can hope to know separately and distinctly every truth in the revealed Deposit. But Catholics believe expressly or impliedly every truth the Church proposes for belief; they are prepared to

accept each one separately and expressly, whensoever they learn that the Church proposes it. They are members of the Church, and share in the favours which God pours out on her. For there can be no doubt that mere membership of the Church of Christ carries with it a claim to God's special love and providence. The visible Church is the mystical body of Christ: "Christ is the head of the body, the Church".[1] "Christ also loved the Church and delivered Himself up for it that He might sanctify it, cleansing it by the laver of water in the word of life; that He might present it to Himself a glorious Church, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing, but that it should be holy and without blemish. . . . No man ever hated his own flesh, but nourisheth and cherisheth it, as also Christ doth the Church. Because we are members of His body, of His flesh, and of His bones."[2] Now if it be true, as St. Paul here tells the Colossians and the Ephesians, that Christ is so head of the visible Church as to make it in some special and peculiar sense His body; if He nourishes and cherishes it as a man doth his own flesh; if He delivered Himself up for it with a particular will and purpose, not common to the rest of those for whom He died, may we not conclude that it is the object of His special predilection, that He bestows benefits upon its members, just because they are members of it; because in the striking language of St. Paul, they are "of His flesh and of His bones"? God forbid that we Catholics should hold, or wish to hold, that there are no supernatural graces to be hoped for outside the visible Church of Christ. We know and rejoice that there are many and most precious. We confess gladly that there can be true supernatural Faith,

[1] Col. i. 18. [2] Eph. v. 25.

and Charity, and Hope, and many other Christian virtues, in the midst of heresy and schism; that there may be valid sacraments, a valid Ministry, the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, and all the various graces which God bestows on those who will accept them. And if "He maketh His sun to rise upon the good and bad, and raineth upon the just and the unjust,"[1] how much more will He grant good things to those inculpably in error, who earnestly desire and strive to love and serve Him? We make no claim, then, to God's exclusive bounty, on the part of true believers who are members of His visible Church. But we have no doubt God views them with a special favour, such as He shows to none without. It may not, of course, be expressed in material blessings; for the true Faith bears with it no promise of them; but it will be surely manifested in supernatural gifts. Make allowance for exceptional mercies bestowed at times on individuals outside the Church, and you will find that her children have higher ideals of Christian life, more abundant grace to aim at them, more efficacious protection against sin, a more pressing invitation to repentance, a greater happiness in reconciliation with God, a more perfect trust in Christ Our Lord, a keener appreciation of God's friendship, more earnest efforts to retain it throughout life, and more loving, often wonderful, supernatural assistance in the hour of dying. All this, and much more of a similar kind, we should expect from God's special love for the Church which He established; all this and much more we see realised in the lives of myriad Catholics; and of all this they are deprived whosoever live without the Church, because they do not receive, even though inculpably, the whole Divine Deposit which she teaches.

[1] Matt. v. 45.

They are excluded also from all share in the Communion of the Saints. The Catholic Church is one great family. Its members are bound together in unity of Faith, of government, and of ritual: we are children of the same household. And hence, though each may have personal and private property, we hold much in common. There are the treasures of Christ's infinite satisfaction to be distributed among the Faithful; there are the superfluous satisfactions of the Saints; there is the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass with its marvellous efficacy, which is offered for every member of the Catholic Church whensoever it is offered; there are the public prayers of the Church for each and all of her children; there is the collective holiness of all—their united Faith, Hope, Love, and all their virtues, ever pleading before God for the whole household of the Faith, sinners and saints alike, and for every individual soul in it. And it is only those who belong to the visible Society that can share in these benefits. The Church grants no Indulgences to those without; the Holy Sacrifice is not offered for them in her name; she does not plead for them in her prayers and ritual; they gain nothing by that corporate saintliness of the Church, which draws down God's special love and favours upon all her children.

They suffer, too, from low standards of holiness: for they almost invariably reject the Gospel Counsels. And they reject them not less in theory than in practice. No doubt there are clergymen in the Anglican, as are the Bishops in the Greek, Communion, who lead lives of celibacy, through reverence for the virtue, and for their own sacred calling. And there are monks and nuns in heresy and schism who make "vows of religion," who bind themselves to poverty, chastity, and obedience, and strive earnestly to imitate the best and most fervent

of Catholic religious. But no priesthood unless our own is obliged to celibacy; those of the clergy who practise it in other religious bodies are rare exceptions. In the Greek Church there are monks and nuns; there are some few scores of them perhaps in the Anglican Communion. But, generally, without the Catholic Church there is no wide and public acceptance or example of the highest teaching of the Gospel. Nay, more, it is very commonly discredited. I do not now refer to the Greek Church, with its unmarried episcopate, and its numerous monasteries of both sexes, I speak of non-Catholic bodies in Protestant countries. And among them, it is matter of general and continuous observation that the leaders of religious thought, the official teachers of the people, discourage from the fulfilment of the Gospel Counsels. They condemn them even as impossible of fulfilment, particularly in times and countries such as ours. Our Lord, no doubt, has said: "Blessed are ye poor, for yours is the Kingdom of God,"[1] and again, "If thou wilt be perfect, go sell what thou hast, and give to the poor . . . and come, follow Me".[2] St. Paul has written: "He that giveth his virgin in marriage doth well, and he that giveth her not doth better,"[3] and again, "I give counsel, as having obtained mercy of the Lord. . . . Art thou bound to a wife? Seek not to be loosed. Art thou loosed from a wife? Seek not a wife."[4] And Our Lord Himself had declared: "All men take not this word, but those to whom it is given . . . there are eunuchs who have made themselves eunuchs for the Kingdom of Heaven. He that can take, let him take it."[5] But Protestantism assures us that the teaching is erroneous: "It would be folly, not perfection, to sell and

[1] Luke vi. 20. [2] Matt. xix. 21. [3] 1 Cor. vi. 38.
[4] 1 Cor. vi. 27. [5] Matt. xix. 11.

give to the poor, as some have done, and to follow after Christ; for even voluntary poverty is not a blessing. There are those who have embraced a virgin life that they may win heaven more safely; but their example is to be avoided, for it is not better to refrain from marriage," and so with all other of the Counsels. Can it be doubted that such a tone of mind, such an attitude, though sincere, towards revealed doctrines, must react unfavourably on religious and moral standards, must tend to lower the whole level of Christian life in the community and the individual? And it must be no small loss to non-Catholic believers that neither encouragement nor opportunity is given them to practise the lofty virtues which Christ and His Apostle so earnestly commended.

And hence they are at a disadvantage in the matter of education. In a Catholic, or indeed in any country, where religion is free to exercise its rights, and Catholics are zealous for the religious and moral training of their children, the education of the young passes naturally into the hands of the clergy or of religious persons. How far such a state of things is commendable we shall not pause to inquire. It will be enough to remark here that the spiritual interests of the child would seem to be safeguarded and promoted in a very special way by entrusting it to clerical or religious teachers; else why should Catholics be so anxious to find such teachers for their children? And this advantage, however we may estimate its value, parent and child in heresy must generally relinquish.

Or, consider what it must mean, in the shaping of our lives, to be quite without devotion to Our Lady. I would not imply that devotion to her is essential to salvation; but there can be no doubt of the admirable influence which it exercises upon Catholics. The example of the Blessed Virgin—her sinlessness, her purity,

her gentle patience, her love of Her Divine Son, her dolours, particularly when set before us in early life, impress the mind and gain the affection of nearly all Catholics. There are few of us but feel that we are largely what we are, in spite of weakness and difficulties and failings, through the hold which devotion to Our Lady has had on us from our earliest years, and the way in which it has become interwoven with our lives. Only Catholics themselves can know how the Blessed Mother overshadows home life amongst us; can know what our schools and colleges owe her, in their formation of moral and religious character; and what her Congregations and Sodalities are doing to maintain a high level of Christian virtue in the midst of the world. And I am not concerned, for the moment, with the lawfulness of devotion to her, nor with the favours she obtains for us in return for our devotion. I speak only of the fact that in the Catholic system, among the influences which make for holiness, one of the most important is our belief in Our Lady's excellence, in her love for us, and in her power to help us. And Protestantism condemns devotion to Our Lady, rejects utterly this most efficacious means of preserving innocence of heart, and of cultivating the most winning and most precious of the Christian virtues.

Examine, further, the advantages which our Faith confers on us, in the Sacramental teaching of the Church. The separated Greeks admit, no doubt, as we do, the seven Sacraments, which the Church defines to have been instituted by Christ; and the Greek administration of them is as valid as our own. But even the Greeks make very imperfect use of the treasures which the Sacraments enshrine; and other non-Catholic communions are still more neglectful of them. Most Protestant sects repudiate all Sacraments whatsoever; the more Catholicly-minded

acknowledge two; though they can agree neither in determining their nature, nor in deciding on their necessity. Baptism, for many, is only a ceremonial initiation into an ecclesiastical society; it has no supernatural effect; there is no urgent reason why it should be received at all, still less why it should be administered with exact care and scrupulosity. The Eucharist is "a sacred sign," and it certainly commemorates the Last Supper. But is Christ Himself really present in it? Is He really received by the communicant? Is it itself a cause of grace in the worshipper who receives it? Or does it only rouse his Faith, or plead for him with God, as washing does in Baptism, so that grace may be bestowed upon him? Protestantism gives, can give, no answer to such questions; at best, it is satisfied with denying the distinctive tenets of Catholicism. Hence the widespread disregard of Sacraments among adherents of the various sectarian Christian bodies: multitudes have never been baptised; other multitudes have been baptised invalidly. Great numbers never approach the Eucharist; many receive it after a merely formal manner; one "takes the Sacrament," as one rests upon the Sabbath, or attends public religious worship. And they admit no other Sacraments. Some few among the Anglicans, who have preserved and who maintain the principles and theory of the Oxford Movement, may endeavour to explain away the 25th of the Thirty-nine Articles of the Church of England. They may strive for the Catholic Faith in seven Sacraments, which the whole tradition of East and West proclaims to be of Christ's own institution. But Protestantism will have naught to do with five of them; and the most advanced of Anglicans themselves dare not venture to administer them all. Is not Extreme Unction wholly in abeyance throughout the Church of England?

But, worse still, if we except again the Greek Church,

and some few other unimportant schismatical bodies, non-Catholic religious sects can offer only two Sacraments to their adherents; the two Sacraments which can be ministered by persons who are not in Holy Orders. For these non-Catholic bodies have no valid Orders. Baptism they can have; for any lay man or woman may confer it; and Marriage they have, if baptised; for it is the parties to the contract who are its ministers. But they have no validly-ordained priests, no validly-consecrated bishops; and therefore no Sacraments which only priests or bishops can administer. They can have no Confirmation, no Confession and Absolution, no Eucharist, no Extreme Unction, no Holy Orders. They may have the name, the form, the ceremonial of the Sacraments; but the Sacraments themselves they cannot have, and cannot, consequently, administer to their members.

And they have no sacrifice. They have none, because, with very rare exceptions, they reject the Mass; and there is no other sacrifice. They have none, because, even were they to accept the Mass, they have no priests to offer it.

A non-Catholic, therefore, of the great majority of Christian sects, however honest in his rejection of Catholicism, is under grave Sacramental disadvantages. He may be unbaptised; he can rarely feel certain of his baptism. Even though validly baptised, he can never be confirmed. Only bishops can confirm; and he has no bishops he can appeal to. He can never be absolved from his sins—not even when dying; for only priests can absolve from sin; and his Church has no true priesthood. There is no Communion for him; because only priests can consecrate the Eucharist. For the same reason he cannot, on his death-bed, be anointed. And his Church can offer no sacrifice for him, dead or living.

It is not necessary to emphasise the contrast by dwell-

ing on the Catholic position. Assuredly, believers without the Church, though they may have Divine Faith and may be honest in rejecting Catholic claims, are at a grievous disadvantage in working out salvation. Neither infidel nor heretic is punished for honest unbelief. The latter may win heaven, if he die in God's grace and friendship. But the likelihood of his winning heaven would be immeasurably increased, if he accepted the whole Catholic Faith, and were a member of the Catholic Communion. Take one of the most favoured adherents of any non-Catholic religious body; suppose him conscientious, earnest, believing, desirous of a perfect Christian life, according to the standards which his Church sets him, and with the means which she provides for him; and then picture him as he will be, if, through the Divine mercy, he enters into the Catholic Church. His Faith becomes certain and unchanging. He lives under the special providence which Christ exercises towards His mystical body. He shares fully in the Communion of the Saints. He is devout to Our Lady, and enjoys her peculiar love and protection. He is encouraged to aim at all that is highest in Our Lord's teaching, at the Gospel Counsels. He is supported and carried forward by appropriate Sacramental graces, in every state and at all the chief moments of his life. There is no hour of the day or night when the great Sacrifice is not being offered for him by the Church, and pleading for him before the throne of mercy. And the current of Catholicism, what we may call the popular and practical expression of revealed Dogma, will bear him onward, almost without effort. He will be frequent in Confession and Holy Communion. He will assist at Exposition and Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament. He will probably become associated with some Sodality or pious Congregation. He will have personal and private devotions of

his own: recitation of the Rosary, Stations of the Cross, Scapulars. He will gain Indulgences. He will attend Missions, make Retreats, join in Lent and Advent exercises of prayer and penance. How shall he not be closer to God and to His Saints, more shielded against sin, more quickened in the practice of virtue, more likely to secure salvation and attain to holiness, than he could be in his own, or any other non-Catholic communion? Better the lowliest place in the true Church of Christ than the fairest and most promising in heresy or schism.

LECTURE IX.

THE WISH TO BELIEVE.

WE are to consider next "the wish to believe," the influence, that is, of our will upon the intellectual assent, by which we hold the revealed doctrines of our religion. But before entering on our chief subject, I will recall briefly the main considerations on which we have already dwelt, and which have led us to the point at which we have arrived in our study of an act of Divine Faith.

Faith, we have seen, is knowledge which rests upon authority; is an intellectual assent which we give to truths made known to us by the testimony of others. It is not truth or hope or love: not any act of will, though influenced by and dependent on the will, but an act of the understanding, which perceives the truth that others witness to, and accepts and affirms it. And in Divine Faith the motive of assent, our reason for believing and asserting any truth whatever, must be the testimony of God. In human faith we believe on the fallible testimony of men: in ecclesiastical faith, on the testimony, fallible or infallible, of the Church; in Divine Faith on the infallible testimony of God. We may assent to religious doctrines because our reason proves them to be true, or because we have been so taught by those placed over us, because others hold them, or because we have read them in the Bible, or the Church teaches them. But for whichever of these motives we believe, or even should we believe for all of them together, we do not and cannot make

an act of Divine Faith: to do so we must believe because God Himself has revealed truth to us. It matters nothing through what channels the revelation comes. It matters nothing what the arguments are by which it is made clear to me that the revelation is from God. But I must be certain, beyond all reasonable doubt, that it is God Who speaks to me; and I must believe because of the testimony which He gives.

And I may not reject or deliberately doubt any statement which I am certain that God has made. It may be concerned with God Himself and with the mysteries of His Divine Nature, or with the universe which He has created and the dwellers whom He has set in it: I can only reject or doubt any part of what He makes known, by calling in question the Divine knowledge or the Divine truthfulness. Nay, more, if the statement be made to me, whether it comes to me directly and immediately from God Himself, or reaches me as a message through others, I am equally bound to believe. God makes a revelation to me in order that I may accept it. Not only may I not reject or doubt it; He claims, in the very fact of speaking to me, that I shall give to it a positive assent.

Nor will anyone question the wisdom or the duty of believing what God has certainly revealed. If belief is ever prudent, if it is ever obligatory, it must surely be so, when an all-knowing and infinitely veracious witness bears testimony to the truth? It may, indeed, be doubted, it may be denied, that God has made a revelation to us; but with that doubt and denial we have already dealt. We have seen, in our study of the Christian Church, that Christ, God in human form, made known a body of doctrines to mankind; that He entrusted them, as a sacred Deposit, to the guardianship of the religious society which He established, and which He commanded to pre-

serve and teach them infallibly, throughout the world, until the end of time. That society we found, upon inquiry, to be the Catholic Church in communion with the See of Rome. And so it must be right and reasonable to believe every doctrine which the Catholic Church maintains or teaches, as contained in the Divine Deposit.

Right and reasonable: and yet so that belief shall be our own free choice. It is true, no doubt, that the arguments which prove the existence and the identity of the Church of Christ are sufficient to convince any impartial mind which gives serious consideration to them. But they put no compulsion on us. Even when they appear most clearly to us, we remain physically free to reject them, if we will. Not free morally: not free, without grave violation of moral duty, to doubt or deny, or even to withhold assent. For, when God speaks to me, I am bound to believe Him; and it is certain that He speaks to me in the doctrines of the Deposit, authoritatively set out for me by the Catholic Church.

The Faith, then, by which we assent to the whole Deposit of Divine revelation, and to each separate doctrine contained in it, is an intellectual act, at once reasonable and obligatory, yet dependent on our own free choice, and therefore vitally affected by our "wish to believe".

But what part can our wishes have, what part ought they to have, in our religious beliefs? Surely, it is intellect, and intellect alone, that should determine my intellectual assents? What place can there be for the action of the will, in accepting truth, which makes appeal to a wholly different faculty, and is to be accepted, not because it is pleasant or useful, or in accordance with our inclinations or desires, but because it is or appears to us to be what it purports and claims to be a correct statement of fact?

We must note, however, that Holy Scripture, although very clear in its account of Faith as an act of intellectual

assent, connects it frequently and explicitly with the affections and the will. Our Lord Himself attributes unbelief to the fact that "men loved darkness rather than the light, for their works were evil".[1] St. Paul writes to the Corinthians of Faith as "bringing into captivity every understanding unto the obedience of Christ";[2] he praises them for "the obedience of their confession unto the Gospel of Christ".[3] He tells the Romans that "with the heart we believe unto justice".[4] He warns them that "all do not obey the Gospel; for Isaias saith: Lord, who hath believed our report?"[5] He speaks of "grace and apostleship for obedience to the Faith in all nations for Christ's name".[6] The writer of the Acts of the Apostles describes how "the number of disciples was multiplied in Jerusalem exceedingly," and adds: "A great multitude also of the priests obeyed the Faith".[7] And when the eunuch of Queen Candaces sought baptism from Philip, the Apostle answered: "If thou believest with all thy heart, thou mayest. And he answering said: I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God".[8] We believe then "with the heart"; we "obey" when we believe; we "love darkness" when we disbelieve: the will, the affections, have a large, we may even say a controlling, part in our acts of Faith. And hence, the celebrated passage already quoted from St. Augustine, whom we may take to represent the unanimous teaching of the Fathers: "A man may enter a Church unwillingly; he may approach the altar unwillingly; he may receive the Sacrament unwillingly: but he cannot believe unless he wills it".[9] And hence, too, the teaching of Trent that by Faith "men approach of their own free choice to God, believing those things to be true which have been revealed

[1] John iii. 19. [2] 2 Cor. x. 5. [3] ix. 13. [4] Rom. x. 10.
[5] Rom. x 16. [6] i. 5. [7] Acts vi. 7. [8] viii. 37.
[9] In Joan. Tr. 6, n. 2; M.L. xxxv. 1607.

and promised,"[1] and of the Vatican Council that "by an act of Faith a man offers to God his free obedience, consenting to and co-operating with grace, which he might resist, if he would".[2]

Nor is it to be wondered at that Holy Scripture and the authoritative teaching of the Church should represent Divine Faith to us as much more than a mere apprehension of, or assent to, revealed truths. There are truths, no doubt, as we have explained already, to which we must assent, whether we will or no. No prejudice, no dislike can enable us to reject or doubt them, if we understand them rightly, and the arguments on which they rest. All mathematical truths are of this class. So, too, are the first principles of mental science; and, it may be, some of the statements of contemporary and even of past history. But such truths are relatively few: we are not generally constrained by evidence in the judgments that we form and the convictions we entertain.

Even in the most important affairs of life we adopt views and opinions, which we hold for certain, for which we are prepared to risk fortune and life, and which, however recommended they may be by reason or by authority, we are not physically forced to accept. I am persuaded of the affection and of the loyalty of a friend: he has approved himself in an experience of many years; I am ready to entrust all my most valued interests to his keeping; and yet I have no compelling proof that he really deserves my confidence. Again, we take it almost for granted, without investigation of any kind, that those are really our parents whom we have been taught to regard as such. We have no absolutely unquestionable proof that they are. We know that others have been mistaken who at one time felt as certain of their parent-

[1] Sess. vi c. 6; Denz., 680. [2] Sess. iii. c. 3; Denz., 1640.

age as we do. Yet we entertain no deliberate doubts; we give father and mother a love and reverence and self-sacrificing devotion which no higher certainty could increase. And again, I am satisfied that a war which my country wages is right and just: I take part in it; I expose myself to the danger of wounds and death; I endeavour to inflict wounds and death on as many of the enemy as I may. But my judgment on the war is not evidently correct: there are millions of educated, honest men, who, with the same facts before them which I have, are convinced that the contrary judgment alone is true. And we might multiply other instances almost indefinitely. In the ordinary conduct of life, indeed, in the gravest and most prudent decisions which we come to, and in the most vital undertakings in which we engage, we are guided nearly always by a certainty—when we do attain to certainty—which falls far short of evident and compelling truth.

Now in judgments of this kind, when we hold as certain that a man is our loyal friend, that our parents are those whom we have ever believed them to be, that our country's war is just, and in countless similar assents, the will bears a large and determining part. Its action passes almost unperceived at times. When the arguments in favour of a conclusion are many and persuasive, when the conclusion itself is at one with self-interest, or prejudice, or inclination, we can accept it readily and cling to it tenaciously, with little or no conscious effort. But, even in such cases, the will has a work to do. It is only evident truth which can determine of itself intellectual assent. Intellect is not itself free; cannot choose of itself to assent or dissent; but must be determined in its judgments by something outside itself. Evident truth does determine it; for evident truth is that which, by its very definition, compels assent. Inevident truth,

however probable, however certain, it may be, cannot produce assent: it goes only some way—greater or less, according to the weight of arguments—towards overcoming the indetermination of the intellect. What is still wanting must come from some other source, and that source can only be the will. Hence, all our judgments upon inevident truth—and they form the vast bulk of all our judgments—are dependent on our will; we assent, because we will or wish to assent. Not only could we withhold assent if we so willed it; we must positively will it, before assent is given.

Let us now apply this to our religious beliefs, to our acts of Divine Faith. We have already discussed at length the nature of these acts, as well when the act is one by which we embrace the whole Deposit of Catholic revelation, as when we assent by it to any particular doctrine which the Deposit contains. In every case revelation comes short of evidence. God might of course, were He so minded, speak to me in such a fashion that I could entertain no doubt as to Who it was that spoke, or what His words meant; and it may be, in that event, my belief, my assent to the Divine statement, would not be free, would not call for, or be dependent on, any action of the will. But, in fact, God has not chosen to make such a revelation to us. As the Deposit of Catholic Faith is set before the men and women of our day, as it has been set before the Christian world from the beginning, it allows of voluntary doubt, nay, of absolute voluntary rejection. It is not brought home to us with such clear and irresistible force that we must admit it to be revealed of God, whether we choose or no. We can doubt, we can deny, that God speaks to us in it. And if we believe, if we hold with an entire and unwavering certainty, that it is God Who speaks to us, and that His words are true; if we are prepared to sacrifice all earthly

goods, to lay down life itself, rather than wilfully to deny or doubt, our Faith is due to the influence of our will. We believe because we will or wish to believe.

But, it may be asked, is it reasonable that the will should thus, as it were, direct a judgment, which the arguments in the case are insufficient to decide? To this question the reply is obvious and complete. It is reasonable to will or desire what is of great and unmixed advantage to the soul; and it is of great and unmixed advantage to know and to believe on the Divine authority what it is certain God Himself has made known to us, and has commanded us to believe. We are assured beyond all possibility of reasonable doubt that God has revealed the whole Deposit of Catholic Faith, each and every truth contained in it; has revealed it for the benefit of mankind, and has commanded mankind to believe it. We are assured, further, that He has commanded His Church to preserve and teach the Deposit; and that He Himself is ever with her, to guard the teaching from all error. And we know for certain that in the Deposit are contained all the doctrines which concern most nearly our sanctification and salvation. How can it not be to our great advantage that we should accept this Divine Deposit, and believe in it unhesitatingly? And, if it be to our advantage, why should we not wish to accept and to believe? The will, then, is attracted by the good which Divine Faith offers, and then most reasonably inclines and determines the intellect to believe.

But it is not only through the direct and immediate interaction of will and intellect that Divine Faith is dependent on the will. In an act of Divine Faith, we believe on the Divine authority, because we know for certain that God has revealed the truth or doctrine which we believe. When men doubt or disbelieve, it is almost always because they will not consider at all, or will not

consider impartially, or will not be convinced by, the arguments which go to prove that God has made a revelation to them. Few men are so perverse as to say: I know God speaks to me; but I will not give credence to what He says! And the will has a controlling influence in our consideration of these arguments, or "motives of credibility," as they are technically called.

For, firstly, it is the will which must decide whether we shall consider them at all or no. Clearly, we are free to fix our attention upon what purports to be a Divine revelation, or to withhold it, as we may choose. We may examine the grounds on which it claims to be from God (the "motives of credibility") or we may turn away from them. We may occupy ourselves in other things, to the exclusion of all serious thought about religion: or we may devote to revealed truth only very cursory and careless thoughts. God could, of course, were He so to choose, compel our attention when He speaks to us. He could not only invite us, He could constrain us to examine into the reasons which prove His communications to be Divine. He does not do so. He called on men to listen to His teaching, and weigh His claims, when He lived amongst them upon earth; but He laid no physical constraint upon them: they were free to reject, as most of them did reject, His invitation. And so they are free still; and many men are unbelievers because they will not give to the consideration of religion the time, the grave attention, the earnest thought, which it is necessary to give, if they would judge rightly of it. And it is here that the wish to believe can render precious service. When a man realises even hypothetically the value of a Divine revelation, he should be eager to discover and to embrace it, if it be even probable that such a revelation has been made, and, if eager, he will make opportunity, find time, energy, attention, to investigate the claims

which appear worthy of investigation. He will qualify himself to form and to express a considered judgment on the doctrines of revelation, with at least as much care and thoroughness as he devotes to any of the branches of earthly knowledge.

Then, secondly, our religious beliefs, as most of our opinions, are largely affected by our prepossessions. It is not only that our prejudices may indispose us to accept a doctrine; they will colour the very arguments which are put forward to prove it true. In almost all controversies—theological, political, literary or economic, we see how difficult it is to lay party feeling entirely aside. Principles which appear evidently true to one are as evidently false to others. Reasoning which convinces one will seem vain and inconclusive to another. How rarely does controversy make converts! And it fails to make them because controversialists so frequently are clothed in prejudice, unfitted to judge impartially either the conclusions of an adversary or the arguments by which they are enforced. As it is in the questions of this world, so, too, is it in matters of Divine revelation: the power of prejudice is singularly efficacious. Divine revelation was never so convincingly set before mankind as when Our Lord Himself proclaimed it in Judea and in Galilee. The sublimity and moral excellence of His teaching, His personal character, His miracles, His fulfilment of the Old Testament prophecies: all combined to authenticate His mission and to prove His Divinity. Yet the Jews refused to believe. They listened to His teaching; they witnessed His miracles; they scrutinised His life; they were familiar with the prophecies: and they repudiated His claims. Their prejudices blinded them. "Having eyes, see you not?" Our Lord says to them, "and having ears, hear you not? Neither do you remember."[1]

[1] Mark viii. 18.

"The light shineth in the darkness," St. John tells them, "and the darkness did not comprehend it."[1] They were absorbed by worldly aims and ideals, they were enslaved by earthly traditions, they looked for a Messiah who should come in regal power and magnificence; and so, when Christ came, they would not recognise Him, would have no part in His Kingdom, explained away His miracles, and, when forced to admit them, "from that day they devised to put Him to death".[2] No wonder, therefore, that, in our day too, a chief enemy of religious truth should be prejudice—inborn or acquired prejudice. Men are hindered from accepting, from even considering, religious truth, when presented to them, by the reflection that they themselves were born into another creed; or that theirs is the national religion; or that they have a duty to their co-religionists or to the Church of their baptism; or that change of Faith may involve loss of social standing: that it will strain friendships, grieve relatives, impede advancement, entail perhaps much worldly loss. How shall considerations such as these not influence the mind of non-Catholics, in a country like England or like our own, when the claims of the Catholic Faith are set before them? Must they not often, on quite other than intellectual grounds, be strongly biassed against the truth, disinclined to enter upon any examination of it, ill-fitted to weigh dispassionately, or even understand rightly, the arguments which tell in its favour? No small effort of will is needed to overcome such prepossessions; no small love of truth for truth's sake. And no man will believe, in such circumstances, in the face of such prejudice, unless he wishes earnestly to believe.

And there are graver difficulties in the way of fully accepting, and loyally adhering to the whole Deposit of

[1] John i. 5. [2] xi. 53.

Catholic Faith. I do not now refer to intellectual difficulties which arise from the mysterious nature of many revealed truths. A self-existent Being, a triune God, a Will at once changeless and free, a Person with two natures—a human and a Divine: these and other such objects of religious belief are utterly perplexing in themselves to even the keenest and most impartial mind. But I am not concerned with them here: a more fitting occasion will offer to discuss them. Nor do I refer to what may be called the mere sectarian difficulties, which non-Catholics so frequently put forward against the distinctive doctrines of the Church. It is not easy to sympathise with the mental attitude of a man who can believe that God was born into the world and died upon a cross, yet finds it incredible that Christ changes bread into His own flesh, or gives man power to forgive sin, or makes Councils or Popes infallible. He who can believe the greater may surely believe also the less. Divine revelation is not more clear and explicit for one class of truths than for the other. But, putting aside for the moment both kinds of difficulties, I shall ask you to consider in some little detail the hindrance which moral dispositions may raise to Divine Faith, the obstacles they may place in the way of a will to believe.

And, first, there is so-called pride. Not the pride, or rather vanity of weak minds which strives after an easy notoriety by language that is intended to shock religious persons. Such verbal incredulity lies wholly on the surface, is merely an affectation of doubt or unbelief, and co-exists often with a very firm and anxious Faith. But there is a pride which really refuses to bow before authority. We have said that human folly scarcely ever goes so far as to deliberately deny a truth, which, it is clearly recognised, has been revealed by God. Even then, no doubt, man's Faith is free; he can say: I will

not believe. Few men, however, if any, ever do so. If they reject Divine revelation as a whole, or any of its dogmas, they justify their rejection on the ground that God Himself does not speak to them; the authority to which they will not submit is the authority of the Gospels, or of the Church, or of the official teachers, through whom the revealed doctrines and the Divine witness are made known to them. They insist on judging for themselves, and without any special qualifications, of the authenticity and meaning of the Scriptures; they set aside the definitions of the Church and the teaching of the Catholic Episcopate. If there were question of profane history, they would accept the verdict of experts who have given years of earnest labour to the subject. In medicine, law, mathematics, natural sciences—wherever they have not made a branch of knowledge peculiarly their own by long and serious study, they are willing to be taught by others, to accept guidance and instruction from those whose life-work it is to learn whatever can be known about such matters. But, in Divine revelation, in weighing arguments which depend for their value on detailed and accurate acquaintance with ecclesiastical and civil history, with New Testament criticism, with Jewish and Christian antiquities, with the technical language of Church councils and theologians, in questions which more than most require specialisation, if we are to form opinions for ourselves: in these, men and women, particularly in the earlier years of life, are often found to adventure themselves as judges, without any fitting preparation, and to reject revealed truth lightly because they are ignorant of, or unable to understand, the basis on which Faith in revealed truth rests. They have no wish to believe; and they will neither make suitable inquiry themselves into the evidences of revelation, nor accept the testimony of those whom God has appointed to bear

witness to it. No scientific problems, they seem to think, are so easy of solution for the untrained mind as the high and difficult problems which are concerned with revealed religion.

But a yet more frequent obstacle to belief, a still greater hindrance to any sincere wish to believe, is a life at variance with the law of God and of His Church. Suppose a man habituated to evil—in the possession and enjoyment, for instance, of wealth which has been unjustly come by, or given over to unchastity in desire and in act; and suppose the Gospel of Christ, the Faith of the Catholic Church, to be presented to him for his acceptance. I know it is possible for a man to profess all the doctrines of the Church, and to profess them not in words only, but with a firm interior assent, and yet to sin knowingly and grossly. Faith does not lead of necessity to obedience to the moral law. We may even see men and women devoted after a fashion to religion, courageous in public profession, faithful in partial practice, prepared to make considerable sacrifices for it; but leading lives of grave moral irregularity. They are conscious of the contradiction between beliefs and conduct; but they allow neither to interfere seriously with the other. In word, such persons are often unbelievers; they may even indulge in irreverent or bitter language on religious subjects. They feel driven to attempt some justification, at any-rate in the eyes of others, for their neglect of religious duties; and the easiest justification is a profession of religious unbelief. No doubt, there is a natural tendency, in such cases, to an entire loss of Faith. If my manner of life involves a continued war with conscience, if conscience holds up against me the plain teachings of religion, if I am resolved to persist in my violation of those teachings, what more natural than to wish that those teachings and that religion may be

untrue? And the wish to disbelieve, if entertained deliberately, will prejudice the judgment, when it considers the arguments for belief, and the objections which may be urged against them; and so it becomes possible that even a Catholic, born into the true Faith, instructed carefully in its doctrines, and long accustomed to its holy practices, may cease to believe actively; may go further, and may conceive deliberate internal dissent. But experience, I think, shows that such is rarely the case. Faith may slumber or be beaten down in Catholics who lead sinful lives, as in Catholics who embrace heresy for worldly gain. It scarcely ever dies; and it will almost always reawaken, when opportunity offers, or the end of life approaches.

It is otherwise when the Catholic Faith is presented to those who are still outside: the influences of a sinful life are far more likely to hinder an impartial consideration of the arguments in its favour, and a willing acceptance of the conclusions to which they lead. It is not easy to destroy utterly the religious convictions in which one has been brought up, and to obscure wholly the arguments on which they are founded: but it is not difficult to so prejudice the mind, which first considers them in adult years, that it will not assent to the revealed truths themselves, will not see the force and value of the reasoning which shows them to be revealed. There can be no controversy, I think, as to the antagonism between the Gospel of Christ, embodied in the Church, and the worldly spirit—a spirit which finds its fullest expression in a sensual and sinful life. It is not merely that Our Lord Himself declares to us the enmity which the world bears to Him and to His friends: "The world hath not known Me";[1] the world "hateth Me, because I give

[1] John xvii. 25.

testimony of it, that the works thereof are evil".[1] "Because you are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you."[2] Our own experience, within ourselves and without, is proof that the morality of the Gospel would lay a yoke upon the spirit of the world, against which the world must be ever in revolt. And, if this be so, it is clear that a man who walks in the world's way, and follows after the world's pleasures, and is self-seeking and sensual and sinful, must have great difficulties to overcome, if he is to embrace the Christian Faith, and seek entrance into the Church of Christ, when their claims are first made known to him. He must deny himself pleasures which he has come to love; he must face trials and hardships from which nature shrinks; he must confess his errors and his sinfulness before God and man. And if he will not, if he cannot, resolve on a thorough change of life—— ?

"After some days, Felix coming with Drusilla, his wife, who was a Jew, sent for Paul, and heard of him the Faith that is in Christ Jesus. And as he treated of justice and chastity, and of the judgment to come, Felix being terrified, answered: For this time, go thy way; and when I have a convenient time I will send for thee."[3] And, as it was with Felix, so it is with many men, in every age since Christ made His revelation, and established His Church. They are brought through God's mercy to a knowledge of the Faith; but to accept the Faith, to enter into membership of the Church, they must pledge themselves to "justice and chastity," and the other Christian virtues; they must live within the shadow of "the judgment to come". Not things easy of accomplishment for the sensual, sinful man. No

[1] John vii. 7. [2] xv. 19. [3] Acts xxiv. 24.

wonder that so many have no wish to believe, that they should say to the Divinely appointed messengers of truth and to the Holy Spirit, the inspirer of Faith: "For this time go thy way; and when I have a convenient time, I will send for thee". They turn away from revealed truth; it demands too much sacrifice. They will not examine its proofs, lest they should be found convincing. Their judgment is so biassed by their wish to disbelieve, that, even if they dwell upon the arguments for revelation, they do not see their cogency and certainty. Here, then, again, a will or wish to believe must precede the intellectual assent, which is the act of Faith.

LECTURE X.

THE CERTAINTY OF DIVINE FAITH.

It is matter of experience that, in the assents which we give to propositions, the firmness of our assent is not always the same. We hold some propositions as conjectures only, others as persuasions, others again as opinions, convictions, moral or absolute certainties. I am not, of course, now using the word "assent" in the specific meaning which Cardinal Newman assigns to it in his well-known Essay; still less do I maintain that, in the Cardinal's meaning of the word, there are varying degrees of assent. I am speaking of assent as it comprehends every form of intellectual adhesion which we give to truth, when it is presented, or appears to be presented, to the mind. And in this sense it cannot be questioned that our adhesion to some truths is more unhesitating, less changeful, than our adhesion to others. We conceive of members of a jury before whom a prisoner is brought for trial, and who finally render a verdict of guilty against him, as varyingly affected in their judgment of his guilt, while the case proceeds. After the opening statement of prosecuting counsel they may think it likely he is guilty; as evidence accumulates against him they become more and more satisfied that the charge is true. The defence may, indeed, weaken for a time the growing conviction; but the closing address of the prosecution and the judge's charge and mutual consultation dispel all doubt and hesitancy; and they come to a

decision, without any fear of error. And as a juror's judgment of a prisoner's guilt—suspicion, opinion, credence, certainty—passes through different successive states during the progress of a trial; as each state or phase of mind betokens a different intensity or firmness of adhesion to the statement which the indictment makes, so is it with the myriad statements or propositions which are ever being presented to us throughout the course of life. We may, indeed, refuse to consider them at all. We may, having examined them cursorily or carefully, withhold judgment, on the ground that we see no sufficient reason for either accepting or rejecting them. And we may assent to them in varying degrees of firmness, the highest and most perfect of which shuts out all reasonable and deliberate doubt, induces a mental condition of quiet and repose, and gives to our judgments the quality of certainty.

Certainty, then, is that characteristic or quality of judgment by which the mind so adheres to truth as to exclude deliberate doubt and hesitation. I say "adheres to truth," without seeking to determine whether the truth must be always real, or may sometimes be apparent. For our present purpose it is sufficient to observe that we can and do assent to many propositions with an absolute and entire assurance. We cannot doubt, when we understand them, propositions in mathematics; we cannot doubt first principles in mental science. We do not deliberately doubt, though we may be physically free to doubt, the existence of a world external to ourselves, the main facts of authentic history, the love of parents, the affection of friends, the testimony of well-informed and honourable witnesses. In these and countless other things, which may become the subject-matter of verbal propositions, we often can and do attain to certainty.

Nor is it only within the domain of natural knowledge

that the adhesion of the intellect to truth admits of various degrees of firmness. In revealed religion itself, or rather in our mental attitude towards it, we observe a similar phenomenon. I do not mean that we may ever waver in the assent we give to the doctrines which we know to be contained in the Divine Deposit. But it may be only probable, very likely, almost certain, that a given doctrine is contained in it, or is necessarily connected with it, or may even fairly be inferred from it. There may be no definite Church teaching on the subject. Holy Scripture is perhaps obscure, the Councils are silent, the Apostolic See has not spokên, the Catholic Episcopate has formulated no judgment, theological schools are at variance with one another. Such was, at one time, in the judgment of not a few most earnest and devout Catholics, the doctrine of Our Lady's Immaculate Conception, now a defined dogma of our Faith. Such were also, at about the same period, and in the opinion of some equally loyal Catholics, the doctrines of papal supremacy and of papal infallibility, which the Vatican Council has since defined. And, in such cases, a Catholic may well feel doubtful, or may only hold it to be more probable, while others will be almost or wholly certain, that the doctrines in question have been Divinely revealed. I do not say that the mind of the Church can ever pass through all these various stages, in its guardianship of revealed truth; could ever positively hold it to be doubtful that the Immaculate Conception or papal infallibility had been revealed. But the mind of the individual can. I may judge of a religious truth: at first, that it probably is revealed, later that the probability is very near to certainty, and finally that its revelation cannot reasonably be questioned. Similarly, I may hold a series of religious truths with very different degrees of firmness: some, as pious opinions, which I am prepared to relinquish if

cause be shown for relinquishing them; some, again, as probably or most probably themselves revealed, or at any rate to be inferred from revelation; and some, as certainly contained in the Divine Deposit. In assents of the two former kinds, I make, as is clear, no act of Divine Faith: I am not certain that God has revealed the truth I assent to; I may even in many cases entertain deliberate doubt: the pious or probable or most probable opinion has no convincing argument in its favour; there is no sufficient proof that God has spoken. But in assents of the third kind—when the truth is clearly recognised to be contained in the Deposit, when it is morally certain that God Himself bears witness to it, then I may and ought to assent to it by an act of Divine Faith; and in that act I can allow of no deliberate doubt; I must adhere to the revealed truth with unhesitating firmness; my act of Faith must be unqualified and certain. The certainty, therefore, of an act of Divine Faith is its firmness of adhesion to revealed truth; a firmness which rests on the testimony that God has given, and which cannot co-exist with deliberate doubt or hesitation.

Hence Holy Scripture speaks of Faith as "believing with all one's heart,"[1] which implies the absence of deliberate doubt. Hence St. Paul tells the Galatians: "Though we or an angel from heaven preach a gospel to you beside that which we have preached, let him be anathema";[2] and, again, "As we said before, so now I say again: if anyone preach to you a gospel, beside that which you have received, let him be anathema. . . . For neither did I receive it of man, nor did I learn it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ."[3] And, writing to the Colossians, he prays "that no man may deceive them by loftiness of words," and continues: "For, though I be

[1] Acts viii. 37. [2] Gal. i. 8. [3] i. 9.

absent in body, yet in spirit I am with you, rejoicing, and beholding . . . the steadfastness of your Faith which is in Christ, . . . rooted and built up in Him, and confirmed in the Faith, as also you have learned. . . . Beware lest any man cheat you by philosophy and vain deceit, according to the elements of the world, and not according to Christ."[1] And, again, to Timothy: "I know whom I have believed, and I am certain He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him against that day".[2] And St. Peter, in his first Pentecost address: "Therefore, let all the house of Israel know most certainly that God hath made both Lord and Christ this same Jesus, Whom you have crucified".[3] Now, what does all this mean, and much more which might be quoted to the same effect, if not that belief in the Gospel teachings—Divine Faith—is a firm, a "steadfast" assent, as St. Paul terms it, to a Divine revelation, an assent which no difficulties are allowed to hinder or to shake.

And, hence, in his wonderful description and panegyric of Faith, contained in his Epistle to the Hebrews, St. Paul tells them that it is "the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things unseen";[4] which no wavering belief could be. Then he goes on to cite a long list of instances from the Old Testament in which Faith overcame great obstacles and worked marvellous results, approving its strength and steadfastness. And he closes by reminding them of "Gedeon, Barac, Samson, Jepthe, David, Samuel, and the prophets, who by Faith conquered kingdoms, wrought justice, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, recovered strength from weakness, became valiant in battle, put to flight

[1] Col. ii. 4. [2] 2 Tim. i. 12.
[3] Acts ii. 36. [4] Heb. xi. 1.

foreign armies. . . . And others had trial of mockeries and stripes, moreover also of bonds and prisons: They were stoned, they were cut asunder, they were put to death by the sword, they wandered about in sheepskins, in goatskins, being in want, distressed, afflicted: of whom the world was not worthy; wandering in deserts, in mountains, in dens, and in caves of the earth."[1] Could the great Apostle express more graphically and more plainly the power and assurance of Faith, which could win such victories, and be proof against such trials, as he enumerates?

Hence, too, the Catholic Church has ever taught that deliberate doubt and hesitation are incompatible with Divine Faith. It is not only that her great and authoritative teachers in every age have strongly emphasised the doctrine; not only that they have compared the certainty of human knowledge, even the most perfect, with that of Faith, and always to the advantage of the latter; but also, and mainly, that the conduct of the Faithful and the example and exhortations of their Bishops show conclusively what the Church has ever held and taught. Men are rarely willing to make serious sacrifices for mere speculative opinions. A mathematician will seldom feel called on to risk his property or personal liberty for the truth of a geometrical proposition. What historian is prepared to shed his blood in defence of the view he entertains on the causes of the French Revolution? Men imperil all they have, they die for causes which are dear to them. But human causes are things, are persons, are great practical issues: they are scarcely ever judgments or opinions. And religious persecutions have been concerned for the most part with beliefs: not with what men do, or claim a right to do; not even with external forms

[1] Heb. xi. 32-8.

of worship, of Church organisation; but with the doctrines which men hold, the very inner judgments by which they assent to doctrines. In the earlier centuries of Christian history, under the pagan Emperors, men went to prison, into exile, to the stake, into the arena, they suffered and perished in countless ways, for the Divinity of Christ, for the Unity of God, for the truth of the Christian religion. I know they suffered for love of Jesus Christ: love was the motive and the mainspring of their constancy. But it was not the cause for which they suffered. It was not demanded of them that they should renounce their love of Christ: they were called on to renounce their Faith in Him. Later—to pass over a decade of centuries—in the days of Henry VIII, of Elizabeth, and in more recent penal times, men suffered in these islands for transubstantiation, for papal supremacy, for the Sacrifice of the Mass: for the truth of the Catholic religion. No doubt they were fined, they were banished, their property was confiscated, they were put to death—men and women, priest and layman, gentle and simple; and the accusation was at times that they were disloyal, had conspired against the crown or civil state. But they could always escape punishment for the imputed crimes by conforming to the Protestant Faith, by professing to reject the distinctive doctrines of Catholicism.

Now the Faithful were persuaded in the early Church as the Faithful were persuaded amongst ourselves in later times, that they had no freedom of choice between loss of goods, of liberty, of life, upon the one hand, and a sincere profession of their religion, on the other. Their Bishops and other clergy so taught and urged; so it was that vast multitudes of laity and clergy acted. And men cannot so act; they cannot in fairness be urged, and even commanded, by an infallible Church, under most grievous penalties, so to act, for a Faith to which their assent may

legitimately be hesitating and uncertain. I should be a fool to die voluntarily for an opinion, the truth of which I deliberately admitted to be doubtful. God's Church would be tyrannical, and worse, if she sought, by every means within her power, to compel me and all her children, at whatever cost, to profess beliefs externally, which we might deliberately call in question. But, in fact, the martyrs died for truth, because they were so certain of it; because they assented to it most firmly, and on the authority of God, "Who could neither deceive nor be deceived," in testifying to it.

And as in her practical teaching and in the lives of her martyrs, so, too, in her more formal pronouncements, the Church insists on the certain assurance which Divine Faith supposes: "This is the Catholic Faith," she declares, in the concluding clause of the Athanasian Creed, "which, unless a man believe faithfully and firmly, he cannot be saved."[1] "We believe firmly and we confess unfeignedly" are the opening words of the Lateran definition at the beginning of the thirteenth century.[2] "The holy Roman Church firmly believes, professes, and declares"[3] is a form used by the Council of Florence in the fifteenth century. "Who is ignorant or can be ignorant," asks Pius IX, in one of his Encyclicals, when summing up the Catholic doctrine, "that we must believe God without reserve, when He speaks to us, and that nothing accords more with reason itself than to rest in those things, and firmly cleave to them, which it is plain God has revealed, Who can neither deceive nor be deceived?"[4] And, in his Bull, "Ineffabilis Deus," defining the Immaculate Conception, after the solemn words of definition, in which he pronounces the doctrine to be

[1] Denz., 40. [2] *Ibid.*, 428. [3] *Ibid.*, 703.
[4] Encycl. Qui pluribus; Denz., 1637.

revealed by God, he goes on to set out the necessary inference: "And, therefore, it is to be believed by all the faithful firmly and perseveringly".[1] Indeed, Innocent XI had already put forward what we may call a more advanced teaching, and one we shall have occasion to discuss somewhat later, when, in condemning some Jansenist propositions, he declared authoritatively that "through the action of the will, an assent of Faith may be in itself more firm than the motives warrant which impel to it".[2]

Scripture, then, ecclesiastical tradition and the Church's solemn definitions afford conclusive evidence that an act of Divine Faith must be firm, unwavering, without admixture of any deliberate doubt; must, in a word, be certain. But, if we pass on to consider the nature of the act itself, shall we find that such certainty is reasonable? I think we shall be able to show easily that it is not only reasonable, but of binding obligation.

It is reasonable. In every act of faith, Divine or human, we assent to truth because of the testimony of another. Our act is not merely a homage of intellect to truth; it is a homage of both intellect and will to the authority of those on whose testimony our assent to truth is given. When I believe a statement that you make to me, and believe it because you make it, I judge you to have the knowledge and the truthfulness that give authority to your statement; and since that authority is not of itself sufficient to compel assent, I freely will to yield to it, and to believe you. If, on the other hand, I reject your statement; if I even withhold assent, I can only do so by questioning your knowledge or your truthfulness, or else by putting you and your statement aside altogether, as unworthy of attention, and not calling on my part for any action whatsoever. And these considerations

[1] Denz., n. 1641. [2] *Ibid.*, 1169.

are not dependent on the manner in which your statement reaches me. You may make it to me yourself directly: you may make it by letter; it may come to me through a friend or through an official messenger. But however it come, if only I am certain that it is from you, I honour you by my belief, I slight you by my disbelief; and I slight you even by my refusal to form any judgment on the matter. And the greater your knowledge is, the greater your truthfulness, the more and greater the claims which you have upon me, the greater also will be the affront I do you, when I deny your statement or withhold assent. If your knowledge be undoubted, your truthfulness beyond suspicion, if it be quite certain that you have spoken to me, and if the subject-matter be one of vital consequence, then it is reasonable, it is of binding duty, that I should believe, and that I should believe firmly, to the exclusion of every deliberate misgiving.

Now, apply these considerations to our act of Divine Faith. When we accept the whole revealed Deposit, or any one of all the doctrines contained in it, our act of belief is at once an intellectual assent to the truth revealed and a voluntary submission to God's authority. I believe, because it is certain that God, infinitely wise and infinitely truthful, reveals the truth to me, and because He commands me to believe it; and I banish every doubt and incertitude from by belief, because deliberately to doubt would be deliberately to question the infinite knowledge or the infinite veracity of God. Who would venture to call such an attitude of mind, such certitude of assent, unreasonable? If it be ever reasonable to rely firmly on human testimony, if it be ever wise and prudent to credit fearlessly the statements made by human witnesses, how much more will it be so, when God Himself is the witness, and when he makes clear that it is He who speaks to us? Indeed, it is evidently more reasonable to believe

unhesitatingly the truths of Divine Faith, however incomprehensible they may appear to be, than to accept any statement, however simple, which rests on the testimony of men. Men are often mistaken, even when they are truthful; and they are often biassed or insincere, when they have accurate knowledge. The channels, too, are often tainted through which their testimony comes. Yet we entertain no deliberate doubt concerning many of the events of past history; we accept without hesitation not a few conclusions of experts in physical science; we believe firmly in some of the incidents narrated daily in the newspaper press. And, of course, we act reasonably in doing so. Why should it not, then, be far more reasonable to believe firmly in the statements, however perplexing, which rest on the testimony of God? His knowledge never errs, His truthfulness never fails; and He Himself guarantees the authoritative channels through which His testimony comes to us.

And if it be wise and reasonable to believe, without doubting, in Divinely revealed truth, then it becomes obligatory to do so. As we have already noted, we slight God, as we slight an earthly witness, when we reject the testimony which He gives. But we slight Him no less when we deliberately doubt His testimony. If you pledge me your authority for the truth of a statement which you have made to me—and, so often as you make a statement to me you give me such a pledge—then I cannot doubt your statement itself, without casting doubt on your authority, without attributing to you either ignorance or deceit. And if it be God Who pledges His authority, and I deliberately doubt, the case becomes infinitely worse; I can only doubt the truths to which He testifies by calling into question His infinite wisdom or His infinite veracity, by attributing to Him—the infinitely perfect Being—either ignor-

ance or deceit. Now consider, further, that God, when He makes His revelation to us, is not only a witness of infinite perfection, but He is also our Creator, our Supreme Ruler, our Father, and the kindest and most generous of friends. I do not say we can believe His revelation, I know we cannot, because of any of these attributes, or of all of them combined. Whatever else He is, or might be thought to be, unless He be wise and truthful, I cannot rest upon His testimony without anxiety or fear. But, if Divine wisdom and Divine veracity be infinite, if they challenge me in the revelations which God has made, if they already constitute a binding claim on my firm and unhesitating assent, then there is no reason why other attributes should not intensify the claim. Surely, the insult offered, when we reject or doubt the evidence of an honourable witness, is more grave and reprehensible if the witness be also a father, a sovereign, a benefactor, or a friend? From the very nature, therefore, of our act of Faith, because of its motive—the testimony of God, which impels us to believe—we must believe firmly; our act of Faith must be certain, and exclude deliberate doubt or fear. The genesis, therefore, and justification of an act of Divine Faith may be thus briefly described; I take the case of an educated Catholic: it comes more nearly home to ourselves, and other cases are easily to be explained by it. A Catholic child is born into the Faith. As he grows up in his home, at school, he is taught its doctrines: he thinks of them as given to him by God; he knows they are so regarded by parents, teachers, friends; he is told so in his Catechism, by his mother, by his masters, and by the clergy of his Church. He learns that he is a member of a world-wide organisation, outnumbering all other Christian societies combined; and that the whole Catholic Church—the Faithful, the clergy,

the Bishops — are united with one another and the Roman See in believing Christ to have revealed their Faith, and to have committed it to the Church's keeping. He is persuaded that the Saints of the past nineteen hundred years—the Martyrs, the Confessors, the Virgins —are on his side. The miracles, of which he hears and reads, have all been worked within and for the Catholic Communion. In the doctrines of his Faith themselves he finds, as a rule, no difficulty. Objections are not urged upon him from without. If he at all considers the position of persons of another creed, he is easily satisfied they are in error; and their error only makes him more convinced that God's perfect revelation has been given to himself, and not to them. I do not say these arguments and others like them, will retain their efficacy in later years, though I see no intellectual reason why they should fail to do so. But, in childhood and in earlier youth, they unite to produce a certainty in the Catholic mind that God Himself is the author of our religion, that He speaks to us in and through His Church, that all her teaching on the doctrines of our Faith rests on His authority, and that our assent to them must be absolute and unwavering. And so it is that a Catholic child believes; he never doubts deliberately; he never could be justified in doubting. He has no such convincing proof that she whom he calls mother has really given him birth, that the elements of knowledge which he is laboriously acquiring are set before him accurately, that he has duties of courtesy, obedience, affection to those, or some of those, around him, as he has that his religion comes to him from God. And, if it come to him from God, he may not doubt, he never thinks of doubting, its entire and simple verity.

As years pass difficulties may, and generally will, arise; intellectual difficulties, at times; moral difficulties

more commonly. A widening knowledge, reflection, discussion, uncritical reading and study, may suggest objections which he is not in a position at the moment to answer directly and satisfactorily. The revolt of sense against the teachings and precepts of religion is only too likely to prejudice the mind against its evidence, and to weaken, and in cases to destroy, the wish to believe. But in most Catholics, educated men and women, the arguments for the Catholic Faith, which were found sufficient in youth and childhood, retain all their force. They come even to be better understood; they are held more consciously; their cumulative cogency is realised more thoroughly. And new, if not better, arguments are added. A more exact acquaintance with religious teaching, a larger and firmer grasp of secular science, of philosophy, of history, of geology, of biology, and kindred subjects, a more highly trained intelligence, will not only show how empty were many of the objections that once seemed weighty; they will also furnish abundant corroboration for the less reasoned, almost instinctive, judgments of the past. And Divine grace will not be wanting to carry on and to complete the work. If a Catholic, more particularly an educated Catholic, comes ever really to waver in the Faith, to doubt a revealed doctrine of the Church, the fault must be his own; God's grace and convincing reasons are never wanting to maintain his certainty.

But our assent to the truths of Faith may be more certain, Pope Innocent XI has told us, than the arguments would warrant which prove that it is God Who speaks. Those arguments do warrant certainty of assent; they make it certain that God vouches for the doctrine I assent to; they make it certain, therefore, in the same degree, that the doctrine itself is true. Innocent XI, however, says that I can render my assent

firmer or more certain still; and he points out, further, how it may be done: "by the action of the will". Now, it is easy enough to understand how the will can render our religious assents more certain, can render it less reasonable to doubt, if we consider the influence only which the will exercises indirectly on assent. We can will to fix our attention on the truth more earnestly, to dwell chiefly on the arguments in its favour, to look away from difficulties, to divest ourselves of prejudice, to repress pride and sensuality and the other tendencies and passions which are at war with revealed truth. But it is not so easy to understand how the will can act directly on the intellect; bid it, as it were, embrace the truth more closely, and adhere to it more firmly. Yet it appears undeniable that it can do so. Love colours judgment; and not merely by lending force to arguments and motives, but also by its immediate influence on the very act itself. You cannot, I suppose, hold men or women to be learned or prudent or virtuous solely because you love them, and without other proof; but, if there be some proof, love can make them doctors, sages, or saints. You cannot believe firmly a truth of revelation, as you cannot believe in any truth, through a mere wish to believe; but, when you have proof sufficient to warrant certainty, you can intensify it almost indefinitely by the power of your will. Nay, more, in many of our judgments, our certainty, even when greatest, may well seem due, not exclusively, but mainly, to will influences. We never think more highly of a mother's excellence than after she has passed away, when the memory of all we had observed in her has grown confused and dim: love does more than supply for the most vivid recollections. The parties to a controversy are never more entirely persuaded of the justice of their view than when discussion has ended and arguments have been wellnigh

forgotten: feeling and bias, accentuated by discussion, will produce a more profound conviction than any reasoning could produce. No wonder, then, that will should hold such an important place in our assents of Faith, and should give to them a degree of certainty which mere intellectual arguments could never give.

And, further, an act of Divine Faith is supernatural—elicited, that is, by the assistance of Divine grace. We have not had occasion, nor is it necessary now to dwell at any length on this quality of Faith. It is enough to say that God bestows on the believer a very special light to apprehend revealed truth, and a very special impulse of will to assent to it. He may be, he generally is, entirely unconscious of the gift. But, though unfelt by him, his act becomes quite other than it would have been; it is more perfect; he sees more clearly, wills more earnestly; grace makes his Faith more firm and more assured.

And hence the sinfulness of doubt, deliberate doubt, in matters of Divine Faith. Divine Faith, we have seen, is obligatory; I may not reject as untrue, may not even refuse to believe, what it is certain God reveals to me: I insult God, and violate His plainest rights if I do. And the insult and the wrong are no less if I doubt deliberately what He reveals. I dishonour you as greatly when I doubt your testimony as when I reject it altogether; when I profess myself uncertain whether you have lied or spoken truth, as when I simply hold you to be a liar. But may we not doubt the fact of revelation? May we not be honestly uncertain about the truth of a doctrine which purports to be revealed, because we are honestly uncertain that God has revealed it? We have already dealt with the question elsewhere. We have seen that men who are unable to examine fairly and adequately the arguments for revelation may doubt it in good faith,

and may reject it even; and if they doubt or deny that God has made a revelation, they clearly may doubt, nay, they cannot firmly believe, what is certain only if revealed. But a Catholic believer is in a wholly different position. He knows for certain, and in the manner we have already described, that God has made a revelation; he knows that an infallible Church sets out for him the content of that revelation, and guarantees it to be revealed; no objection can arise to which he may not give a direct or indirect and satisfactory solution. He can consult with others; he can pray. He can lead a life in accordance with Faith's teachings. And if he do, we may be assured the arguments for revelation will lose nothing of their earlier efficacy; God's grace will not be wanting to him; he will not deliberately doubt that God has revealed the doctrines of the Deposit, and he will not deliberately doubt the truth of any of those doctrines.

LECTURE XI.

THE FAITH OF THE MULTITUDE.

WE have seen that we are bound to accept, and to believe undoubtingly, on the authority of God, Who has revealed it, the whole Deposit of Catholic Faith. We are to receive it in its entirety, and each and every one of the doctrines contained in it. But, while this is so, and indeed because it is so, the question at once suggests itself: How can all the doctrines of Catholic revelation be subject-matter of obligatory belief? How can I or any other Catholic be expected to know them all in detail? Where is the Catholic, however learned he may be, who can enumerate them, and determine accurately their meaning? In fact, the great majority of the Faithful have only a limited knowledge of the science of revealed religion, as of every other science. And, further, what of the vast numbers of mankind, who seem to live and die without the sphere of Divine revelation, at times and in places in which the Gospel message does not and cannot reach them? The bulk of mankind is even to-day, as it has always been, entirely pagan in religion. What truths, then, must the Faith embrace, which is required of Catholics? And what are we to think of the possibility and likelihood of salvation of the pagan world? The case of those who die in heresy we have already discussed elsewhere.

First, therefore, as to those whom we have called "the Faithful"—the great multitude of believers, who are

members of Christ's Church: is it the case that they are ill-instructed in the doctrines of their religion? Of course, we admit freely that there are Catholics whose religious knowledge is sadly imperfect. Even amongst ourselves not a few are born into unfavourable surroundings, in the slums of our cities and the wild places of our country districts. In childhood they learn relatively little about the Faith; and as they grow older they forget. They are occupied in the hard struggle for a material existence; they have not much time or opportunity to add to the elements of knowledge, which we may suppose them to have acquired. And in other countries the Catholic population is not more happily circumstanced, in many is much less happily circumstanced, than in our own. They have no widely extended familiarity with revealed truths; in many cases they have no clearly defined apprehension of their exact meaning; a clever controversialist would have no difficulty in showing, were he permitted to question them, that their assents are confused at times, and in apparent contradiction one with another. And if this be the condition of the Catholic multitude in our day, what must it have been in times past, when the great mass of the people was wholly uneducated, in the modern acceptation of the term, and when the Catholic clergy was far less zealous than it is at present in the discharge of its duty to teach the entire Gospel of Christ? In the light of what we have seen to be the nature and obligation of a firm Faith in all Divinely revealed truths, can we reasonably hope that the Faith of the Catholic multitude is sufficient, that it embraces a sufficient number of the doctrines contained in the Deposit, and grasps them with sufficient understanding?

The question is not concerned, as is plain, with such as are Catholics in name only, who may not perhaps have

formally repudiated the Faith, but who give it no place in their lives. Some of them never have believed, were never taught even the most rudimentary truths of revealed religion; others have deliberately ceased to think about religion, have put it from them as a burden or a restraint. Both classes are to be found, or were to be found recently, if report speak truly, in many of the larger cities and in not a few of the rural districts of France. Some of the latter class are to be found everywhere and at all times in the Church. But with none of either class are we concerned at present. We have to consider only the case of those among ourselves, or in conditions similar to our own, who actively believe, and, for the most part, practise, their religion, but whose intellectual hold upon it may appear to be defective.

And it is well to note, at the outset, that we run risk of underrating the extent and accuracy of knowledge which our people are possessed of, in matters of revealed religion. It may, indeed, be easy to confuse them by questioning; but it is only among educated persons, if even among them, that clearness of thought finds facile and clear expression. Our people know more and better than they can explain in spoken or written language. There are few Catholic homes in these islands in which children do not hear something, nay a good deal, about God, the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost; about Christ our Lord, and Mary His Blessed Mother; about the Mass, Confession, Holy Communion; about heaven, hell, purgatory, the Angels and the Saints. They go to school, nearly all to Catholic schools, and are taught the catechism. The teachers may be Nuns or Brothers or lay men and women: they are all zealous in the teaching of religion. And Catholic children with few exceptions attend Mass, and approach the Sacraments, and turn to God in prayer. They "say the Rosary"; they "make

the stations," or see them in their churches; they are present at exhortations and instructions by their clergy. They may not understand fully all the language of the Catechism; they may recite prayers and read prayer-books, without a clear comprehension of all they say or read: they may listen heedlessly to instruction in Church and school; but they must almost of necessity become fairly acquainted with all the fundamental doctrines of our religion. The very Apostles' Creed, which, we may suppose almost all our people to repeat daily, constitutes already, in what it expressly states and in what it further implies, a very clear and pregnant compendium of Catholic theology.

We are to remember, next, that the revealed doctrines, or Articles of Faith, which it is absolutely necessary for men to believe explicitly, are very few. The Church is bound to preach the whole Gospel of Christ—"All things whatsoever I have commanded you";[1] and men are bound to believe the whole Gospel, when it is preached to them. But it is evident that men are not all bound to believe explicitly and at once every separate doctrine contained in the Deposit; nor is it possible for the Church so to set it forth. Education in religion, like all education, is a gradual process; and it must be adapted to the opportunities and capacity of those on whom it is bestowed. Hence we observe in the Apostolic Church that comparatively little was required from converts to Christianity. St. Peter's Pentecost discourse which resulted in the baptism of "about three thousand souls"[2] was concerned exclusively with the personality of Christ, and with the crime of which the Jews were guilty in putting Him to death. In Samaria, "when they had believed Philip preaching of the Kingdom of God in the

[1] Matt. xxviii. 20. [2] Acts ii. 14.

name of Jesus Christ, they were baptised both men and women".[1] To the man "of great authority under Candace, Queen of the Ethiopians," the same Philip explained the prophet Isaias, and "preached unto him Jesus"; and, on the eunuch's profession of Faith: "I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, they went down into the water, both Philip and the eunuch, and he baptised him".[2] When the keeper of the prison in Philippi besought Paul and Silas: "Masters, what must I do that I may be saved? But they said: Believe in the Lord Jesus; and thou shalt be saved, thou and thy house. And they preached the word of the Lord to him and to all that were in his house . . . and himself was baptised, and all his house immediately."[3] So, too, in Thessalonica, "Paul, according to his custom, went in unto them (in the synagogue), and for three Sabbath days he reasoned with them out of the Scriptures, declaring and alleging that Christ was to suffer and to rise again from the dead, and that this is Jesus Christ Whom I preach to you. And some of them believed, and were associated to Paul and Silas, and of those that served God and of the Gentiles a great multitude, and of noble women not a few."[4] But I need not multiply quotations: for nothing can be plainer from the Acts of the Apostles than that the first preaching of the Gospel was not a detailed exposition of the whole Christian Creed, but a simple setting forth of Christ's claims, and of the evidence which established them. "And every day they ceased not," we are told of the Apostles, "in the temple, and from house to house, to teach and to preach Christ Jesus."[5] And St. Paul, in his first Letter to the Corinthians, sums up in the same sense the whole Apostolic office: "For Christ sent me

[1] Acts viii. 12. [2] viii. 38. [3] xvi. 30.
[4] Acts xvii. 2. [5] v. 42.

not to baptise, but to preach the Gospel. . . . We preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews indeed a stumbling block, and unto the Gentiles foolishness, but unto them that are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God."[1] No doubt the Jewish converts may be supposed to have believed already in the great truths revealed under the Jewish Dispensation; but not so the Gentiles: and yet all were received to Baptism, on believing in Christ Our Lord; and all at once received the Holy Ghost, by the laying on of hands.

Indeed, no such full and detailed preparation for reception into the Christian body was possible in Apostolic times as is commonly judged necessary in the case of converts to the Church in our day and amongst ourselves. Nor is it always possible even now in missions to the heathen. When we read of Francis Xavier baptising hundreds, sometimes thousands, in India or Japan, after a single sermon, we know that he can have preached to them only a very few, and those the most fundamental, doctrines of the Faith. Of course, converts in the early Church, as converts, and indeed all Christians, at all times, were bound to perfect their knowledge, as opportunity offered; and the Gospels and Epistles, composed for the purpose of assisting them, show how thorough that knowledge was to be. God intends that His whole revelation to mankind shall be known and believed: He never speaks to us idly and without purpose. All the truths which He reveals must have an important bearing on our lives; else an all-wise God would never have revealed them to us. Hence the serious obligation to seek out and hold firmly the chief doctrines of revelation (since we cannot hope to learn them all), those, more particularly, which are set before us in the teaching of the Church—

[1] 1 Cor. i. 17.

in her Creed, in her solemn definitions, and by the united voice of her Episcopate. But we are not discussing here the call we have to an explicit Faith in all the contents of the Divine Deposit, still less the nature of the obligation which a Divine precept imposes on us; we are dealing with a simpler question—the Articles of belief, which it is essential we should hold if we are to obtain salvation.

And St. Paul is commonly reputed to have marked them out, when he wrote, in his Epistle to the Hebrews: "He that cometh to God must believe that He is, and is a rewarder to them that seek Him";[1] as though Faith in God and in His heavenly providence were alone absolutely demanded of us. Some controversy has gathered round St. Paul's statement; and many Catholics maintain, in view of New Testament teaching, that Faith in Christ the Redeemer is absolutely necessary also. But, whichever opinion be correct, it is clear that Faith in a very few simple truths, in two or three of those contained in the Apostles' Creed, will not be insufficient. This is indeed one ground of our earnest hope that many without the visible communion of the Church, whose Faith is incomplete and mutilated, may yet see God in heaven. If they are honest in the errors which they hold, they may still believe with a Divine Faith these few fundamental truths of which we have just made mention. And this, too, is the ground of our certainty that the Faith of our Catholic people, however imperfectly they may seem to be instructed, is far more than what is absolutely necessary. In these islands, at any rate, with which we ourselves are more intimately acquainted, there are none among them but believe in God, and heaven, and Jesus Christ our Lord, and in many more of the great truths of our religion.

[1] Heb. xi. 6.

Besides, all Catholics are prepared to believe, as revealed by God, whatever the Catholic Church declares to be revealed. For we cannot deny or doubt, or even withhold assent from any doctrine which it is certain God reveals to us; and it is of Catholic Faith that the Church is infallible when she teaches that any given doctrine is contained in the Divine Deposit. We must be and we are prepared to believe firmly all Divinely revealed truth; and the teaching of the Church makes clearly and infallibly certain for us what has been Divinely revealed. Hence, in the act of Faith which is read aloud in our churches before Mass, and in which all the Faithful join, we make profession of various doctrines of the Creed, and then continue: "I believe these and all other articles which the Holy Roman Catholic Church proposes to our belief, because Thou my God, the infallible Truth, hast revealed them, and Thou hast commanded us to hear the Church, which is the pillar and the ground of truth". Hence, too, in the solemn Profession of Faith made by every convert to the Church, the convert declares: "I, now, enlightened by Divine grace, profess that I believe the Holy Catholic Apostolic Roman Church to be the only and true Church established on earth by Jesus Christ. . . . I believe all the articles that she proposes to my belief, and I reject and condemn all that she rejects and condemns." And it concludes: "With a sincere heart, therefore, and with unfeigned belief, I detest and abjure every error, heresy, and sect opposed to the said Holy Catholic and Apostolic Roman Church. So help me God, and these His Holy Gospels which I touch with my hands." And in the form of oath which the late Pope Pius X prescribed for Catholic ecclesiastics, to be taken on stated occasions, the opening words are: "I firmly embrace and admit all and every of the truths which are defined, set forth, and declared, by the infallible teaching

authority of the Church, more particularly those heads of doctrine which are directly opposed to the errors of these times".[1] Nor can it be necessary, as is plain, to know in detail what are "the articles," "the truths," the "heads of doctrine," the "errors, heresies, and sects," which one is called on, and professes, respectively to embrace and abjure.

And now, if it should be asked how it can be reasonable to commit our religious beliefs—beliefs for which we must be ready to lay down life itself—to the guardianship of the Church, so that our acts of Divine Faith shall be dependent on her teaching, we find ample justification and defence in the dogma of the Church's infallibility, on which we have elsewhere dwelt. Not that the motive of our Faith is, or can be, the authority of the Church. We believe, not because the Church teaches, but because God reveals; and we are assured that God reveals because the Church declares infallibly that He has done so. I do not, of course, mean to assert that we cannot believe, unless the Church guarantees the revelation; the Apostles believed in Christ's teaching before the Church was founded; we ourselves could and ought to believe in a private revelation, if God should speak to us plainly and beyond all doubt, as He did to them. And again, I can believe at once, and without appeal to the Church's testimony, the whole teaching of our Lord, when I find it distinctly stated in the Gospels, when I know the Gospels to be authentic history, and when it is manifest to me from that authentic history that Christ Our Lord is God. But our people in general make no critical study, and can make none, of the Gospels; they have no private revelations, direct or indirect, of which they can be absolutely certain; they must rest their Faith on Divine revelation, as the Church testifies to it.

[1] "Sacrorum Antistitum," 1 September, 1910.

Further, nearly all the truths of Faith which our people assent to, and all the others of which they know nothing consciously, are contained implicitly in some few broad and comprehensive doctrines which every Catholic admits. When I believe of Divine Faith that Christ is true God and true perfect man, I believe in fact, though at the moment I may have no distinct knowledge of, the dogmatic definitions of Popes Leo and Agatho, of the third, fourth, and sixth Œcumenical Councils, with the condemnations of Nestorians, Eutychians, and Monothelites. The whole doctrine of the Incarnation, all the separate truths which were once the subject of so much controversy, and are now the settled heritage of the Church, are contained in the simple statement of St. John: "The Word was made flesh and dwelt among us".[1] If I believe that, I believe that in Christ there is only one person, and that person Divine; I believe there are in Him two natures really distinct; I believe that, in His human nature, He has a body and a soul; and that in His human soul there is a will, which acts as our wills act, but without rebellion and without sin. Further, when the Church defines these distinct and separate doctrines, she propounds no new revelation, she draws no inference even from the revelation already made: she only declares the content of the revelation, the full meaning of the words which St. John employs. And when I believe, with an express and formal assent, each doctrine as the Church defines it, I believe no new truth: I but believe, with conscious intention, what I had believed always unconsciously; since, whether I think of it or no, duality of nature, body and soul, will and volition, are required to make up the very concept of a person who is at once true God and perfect man.

[1] John i. 14.

Or, take the case of one of the simple Faithful, who believes expressly the few absolutely necessary truths of revelation, and knows almost nothing expressly of any more. We have said that such a case is a very rare one among our people: but let us suppose it to occur. A man says: "I believe in God the Father Almighty, and in Jesus Christ His only Son . . . ; I believe in the resurrection of the body and life everlasting . . . I believe these and all other articles which the Holy Roman Catholic Church proposes to our belief, because Thou, my God, the infallible Truth, hast revealed them." He is not only prepared to believe those "other articles," when he knows for certain, if he should ever come to know, both what they are and that "the Church proposes them for his belief": he professes to believe them now; he does believe them as really already as he believes in the various Divine attributes which are involved in the concept of "God the Father Almighty".

This, then, is what we mean by implicit or implied belief: a parallel to the sorrow which I feel for forgotten sins, when I grieve explicitly for those which I remember, through a motive of love or fear, or through any other motive, which is equally applicable to the sins that I forget. These, too, as no one doubts, are forgiven: my sorrow for them is real and effective; I grieve for them, though it be only implicitly, since they are not present to my mind. Now, I would not be taken to allege that implicit Faith is as advantageous to believers as the Faith which is particular and express. The more we know of revealed truths, the more intimately we penetrate them, the more clearly we distinguish them from one another, the greater will be our knowledge of God and of His ways, the more likely we shall be to love Him and to serve Him. It is advisedly that God has made so plentiful a revelation to us. All I contend for is that implicit

assent, the belief in the whole Divine Deposit, without clear and distinct knowledge of each of the doctrines contained in it, is an act of Divine Faith in all those doctrines, is a submission of intellect and will to the Divine authority as perfect and as meritorious as could be the most detailed belief; and that it can leave us in no anxiety as to the condition of even the least happily circumstanced and least instructed of our Catholic people. They know, all of them, and believe in, the essential truths. They believe expressly and distinctly in many more. They are prepared to believe explicitly in all which the Church proposes for their belief. And so they believe really, though only impliedly, in every doctrine of the Deposit which God has revealed.

But what of the pagan world? If Divine Faith be necessary for salvation, as we have seen it is; and if Faith's motive must be the Divine authority: "I believe, because God, infallible Truth, speaks to me"; what is to be the lot of those vast multitudes, in every age of the world's history, whom no knowledge of God's revelation has ever reached? "Whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord," St. Paul writes to the Romans, "shall be saved. But how shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they hear without a preacher? . . . Faith, then, cometh by hearing; and hearing by the word of Christ."[1] Before men can believe of Divine Faith, they must know for certain that God has made a revelation to them. To believe the essential truths they must know that He has revealed His own existence, a supernatural providence, perhaps even Christ, His Son. How shall they know it in savage lands, into which the Gospel messengers have never gone, which have no contact with believing peoples, which have

[1] Rom. x. 13.

no traditions that can tell them aught of a revelation made in earlier times? We can scarcely doubt that myriads of men and women have been born into the world, and lived and died, without hearing ever of God's revelation to mankind, without assenting ever to any truth on the authority of God. And their ignorance is not seemingly attributable to themselves, but to the time and circumstances in which they have been placed. There was none to take revelation to them; they could not seek it for themselves; they did not even suspect that a revelation had been made. Did they all perish, and for want of Faith? And, if so, what are we to say of the goodness and the providence of God? The question is often asked: it must rise up unbidden in our own minds, even though there be none to ask it.

In looking for an answer, we have, at the outset, to be clear with ourselves that man has no absolute right or claim to eternal happiness with God in heaven. No doubt God has created man for heaven; but He need not have done so. He could have created him for life on this earth only—a life that should cease wholly after a time, or a life that should be followed by earthly rewards or earthly punishments. Of His great and gratuitous goodness He opened heaven to mankind; but on conditions; and clearly He was justified in making those conditions what He would. When you wish to bestow a favour, one to which the recipient has no sort of claim, you are entirely free to fix the terms on which you will bestow it. You may not, perhaps, without cruelty and injustice, punish those who fail inculpably to fulfil your terms; but, if they fail, you may, without cruelty or injustice, refuse to bestow the favour on them. It matters nothing in such a case that they were not in fault. There are those who fail to enter, others who fail

to qualify, for a prize that you propose to give. Some know nothing of your offer; others forget to take the necessary steps in time; others, again, are hindered in their efforts to become worthy of it. Are you cruel or unjust because you will not give the prize to those who, for whatever cause, have failed to win it? Are you even bound to place all the means at their disposal which they may need in order to deserve it? So God is not bound to bring to the knowledge of all mankind His purpose of bestowing a heavenly life on those who qualify for it while on earth, still less need He reveal to them the conditions on which they may obtain it. He is not bound to provide them with the means, however useful they may be or even necessary, for its attainment. He is not bound to remove obstacles from their way. And He does no wrong, if He refuses heaven to all, who, culpably or inculpably, through ignorance or impotence, fail to comply with the conditions on which He has appointed heaven to be won. If, without fault on his own part, a man fall short of heaven, no punishment will come upon him: for punishment follows only upon sin; but he has no just grievance against God, Who has failed in nothing of what He was bound to do. Indeed, the case of an adult who lives and dies, without hearing ever of the Faith, and without opportunity to believe the necessary truths of revelation, is as the case of the child who dies before Baptism. The child, too, is meant for heaven; but it can only enter there through Baptism, if the use of reason be forestalled by death. Should it die unbaptised, it has neither fault nor choice: it could make no effort to fit itself for heaven. And yet it is shut out; and no wrong is done to it: a high and most precious privilege was promised it, under one condition; and now the privilege is withheld because the condition is unfulfilled. Men, therefore, can complain of no injustice, if heaven be

denied them, because, through no fault of their own, they live and die without Divine Faith.

But are men and women who have passed from childhood into adult life excluded in fact from heaven, because of unbelief? We shall have occasion to consider, a little later, exceptional cases that may possibly arise; but, speaking of the mass of men and women, in infidel or pagan countries, who, dying, know nothing of the Faith, we may be sure they are not condemned for unbelief alone. It is not easy to observe the moral law, to obey all its precepts, even in the light of Faith, and with all the aids which Faith brings. What must it be, where Divine Faith is wanting, and without the graces which follow upon Faith? You are familiar, I suppose, with the terrible picture which St. Paul draws of the heathen world, in which Faith is replaced by philosophy, and men "worship and serve the creature rather than the Creator, Who is blessed for ever"? "As they liked not to have God in their knowledge," he writes to the Romans, "God delivered them up to a reprobate sense, to do those things which are not fitting: being filled with all iniquity, malice, fornication, avarice, wickedness, full of envy, murder, contention, deceit, malignity, whisperers, detractors, hateful to God, haughty, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, foolish, dissolute, without affection, without mercy."[1] But I need not quote the whole of his description. Now, I suppose that an uninstructed pagan is in a certain sense less accountable for sin than a Christian believer: for revealed religion points out moral obligations with a clearness and emphasis unknown to heathenism; and the moral corruption of pagan civilisation is more unclean than that of barbarism. Yet, it seems plain that, without the God of revelation, and

[1] Rom. i. 28.

without Faith in Him, the mass of men will fall away into immorality, and will sink quickly to its lower depths: the testimony of St. Paul is the verdict of all history. We may take it then as certain that few if any unbelievers reach adult years and the end of life, without personal and grievous sins; and so they are shut out generally from heaven, not solely because they lack Divine Faith, not even because the taint of original sin is upon them; but because they have grave personal sin to answer for—sin freely committed and with sufficient knowledge of its guiltiness, for which they have never sought, or thought of seeking, forgiveness from God.

And what of the few, if there be even a few, who can pass through life and keep their souls from sin, without any knowledge of revelation, or Faith in any of its doctrines? The case can happen, however improbable it may be. For God gives and must give to every man, believer and unbeliever alike, the assistance absolutely needed to refrain from sin: else sinfulness becomes impossible. What, then, if it do happen? It might, of course, be answered that such a one, though free from personal sin, is burthened with original; and, even had he Faith, could never enter heaven. But the answer only shifts the difficulty, makes no attempt to solve it: and the difficulty has been felt to be a grave one by Christian thinkers. I shall put very briefly to you a theory which has been advanced to meet it, while warning you that it is rejected by theologians generally, is scarcely to be distinguished from a condemned Jansenist proposition, and, as it stands, cannot safely be maintained or accepted. It is certain, then, indeed of Faith since the Vatican Council,[1] that human reason can demonstrate beyond all doubt the existence of "God, author, and

[1] Denz., 1806.

end of all things": and demonstrate it without any supernatural aid, and without any special revelation. Man can argue from the creature to the Creator, can see in created things the testimony which God bears to Himself and to many of His attributes; can believe in one God, in His Providence, in His infinite goodness in Himself and to mankind; and can believe it on the authority of God, Who reveals it in creation. And man can love God so known, can love Him above all other things, for the infinite lovableness of His Divine nature, and for His infinite generosity to mankind. Nor will God refuse His grace to the knowledge and the love: both will be supernatural; and the love will be Divine charity, and will sanctify the soul, make it a sharer in the Divine friendship, and heir to heaven. Such is the theory designed to meet the case of the multitudes, to whom the Gospel has never been preached, who have heard nothing of the revelation which God has made, beyond the revelation which He makes in and through the universe that we see within us and around us. It comes very near to the twenty-third proposition condemned by Innocent XI in 1679: "Faith improperly so called, based on the testimony of creatures, or some other similar motive, is sufficient for justification".[1] And it is practically useless for the purpose for which it was designed: How many unbelievers are there who will find the true God in nature, and discover an eternal providence in created things? "They are inexcusable," St. Paul says, if they fail, "for God hath manifested it unto them."[2] But the history of Greece and Rome, of the most cultured as of the most savage peoples, will show how difficult, how wellnigh impossible, it is for human reason, unaided by Divine Faith (in the

[1] Denz., 1173. [2] Rom. i. 20.

stricter acceptation of the words), to acquire with certitude any true knowledge of God and of His providence for men.

Hence, other Catholic apologists, and more commonly, have recourse to a special intervention on the part of God. An infidel comes to die—one of those whose case we are considering, who has heard nothing of the Gospel, nothing of any supernatural revelation, but who has lived, according to his lights and the dictates of his conscience, in obedience to the natural moral law. He has never made, he could not make, an act of Divine Faith, such as he must make, if he is not to perish: will God enable him to make it now? We have already noted that God is under no obligation to provide even such a dying man with the necessary means for an act of Divine Faith. And God's providence, so far as we understand it, towards unborn infants, and towards all children who die unbaptised, before the use of reason, would seem to imply that He does not in fact provide them. But the opinion of which we now speak admits that the dying man is enabled to make an act of Divine Faith, and seeks to explain how he makes it. God, it is suggested, will come to his aid miraculously, will send to him a human teacher, an angel, if necessary, to instruct him in the truths which he must believe, and in the Divine revelation of them. If only the opinion were as well founded as it is consoling, we should accept it gladly: but it is difficult to find any solid basis for it in Scripture or in ecclesiastical tradition; it introduces unnecessarily the preternatural element of a human or angelic agency, while God Himself could directly make the revelation; and it does not by itself explain the salvation of such a soul. For Divine Faith is not a sufficient preparation for the gift of sanctifying grace, and for admittance to the Divine friendship.

If we are to adopt any theory of a special providence in such cases—and every theory must be more or less arbitrary, when God has not judged fitting to inform us of His ways—there is another to which we may also give some consideration. And it has this advantage, that it embraces other cases than that of the dying unbeliever: it is applicable to all whom death comes to unprepared, and to whom God wills to show efficacious mercy. He may be conceived of as visiting them, at the very moment of their dying. If there be need, He reveals to them the truths they must believe; He shows them the beauty and the goodness they ought to love. They believe and love: they are justified; and they are saved. Does He so act often? Does He so act ever? Who shall say? If He do, it is only in keeping with His marvellous mercy and His infinite love of souls.

To sum up. Men, all men, must believe firmly the whole Deposit of Divine revelation, if they will be saved. And our people do believe it: they are instructed in and hold explicitly its chief doctrines; they are prepared to believe explicitly all doctrines which the Church declares or may declare to be contained in it; they already hold implicitly in a few comprehensive propositions all and every of the doctrines which God has revealed. As to the pagan world, the view of Holy Scripture is a gloomy one: a vast multitude of unbelievers hear nothing of a Divine revelation during life. Many become burthened with grave personal sin; and if they die in sin, are lost. Some few may possibly, particularly if life be short, pass through it without grievous sin. What is their condition when they come to die? Without Faith, "they shall not see God". Will God bestow Faith on them? He has nowhere told us that He will. He may make His revelation known to them through special channels. He may Himself directly make it known. He may, in

the very separation of soul and body, grant them a vision of Himself, which shall draw them to Him almost irresistibly in Faith and Love. But there is no call on Him to give them such extraordinary assistance; we have no warrant in His usual providence to expect that He will give it; if we build theories and permit ourselves to hope, it is only because of God's "tender mercies, which are above all His works".

LECTURE XII.

FAITH AND REASON.

No charge is made more frequently against the Church than that Catholic Faith conflicts with reason: that Faith not only has a tendency to discourage the activity of reason in questions of religion, but shackles and represses it in every branch of knowledge. The Catholic believer, who accepts unquestioningly the whole deposit of Divine revelation, who is prepared to accept "all the articles which the holy Roman Catholic Church proposes, and may in future propose, to our belief," and who feels constrained to accept the teachings of his Faith as the ultimate standard of truth in all exercises of reason, is surely not in a position to pursue seriously any scientific investigation whatsoever? Why should I, how can I, undertake whole-heartedly the study of history, biology, mental and moral science, of almost any science except pure mathematics, while I am liable at any moment to be brought up against some teaching of the Church, and must control all my inferences and conclusions by the decisions of Church authority? What becomes of intellectual liberty under such conditions? And what promise can there be of intellectual progress, of the advance of science, when the pursuit of knowledge must be carried on in constant dread of Church interference?

We might find a sufficient answer to such questions in the history of mediæval thought, and of the great centres

of mediæval learning—of Universities like Oxford, Paris, Bologna, Padua, Salamanca, or Louvain. There was never a time when the Church exercised a greater influence on University life and studies, never a time when men's minds were more active in searching into and discussing both secular and religious problems, and never a time when men published more freely to the world the conclusions they had come to, and the theories they had built up. There is no sign that students or professors lived in fear of the Holy Inquisition, or were hindered in their work by any intrusion of its authority. But I prefer to appeal to this National University of Ireland itself. During all the years when there was question of satisfying in some measure the educational claims of Irish Catholics, we know how it was urged by many who were opposed to us that a University under Catholic control, in which there was a Catholic atmosphere, where the staff and undergraduates were in great majority Catholics, must be condemned from its birth to be the home of obscurantism. It could never become a place of genuine learning. The Catholic Faith and the Catholic Church would bar the way to all honest intellectual activity, and to all true freedom of thought. It was only in a Protestant or atheistic institution that higher education could be carried forward to success.

They might have remembered, indeed, that great Belgian University, whose merits they have discovered and belauded, since its destruction three years ago.[1] Louvain, in modern times as in mediæval, was a creation of the Church. It was informed with the Catholic spirit: it was instinct with Catholic life. The only non-academic authority which it recognised was that of its founders, the Catholic Bishops. And yet it was among the fore-

[1] August, 1914.

most, if not itself quite the foremost, of the Universities of Continental Europe. But they closed their eyes to all this, and asserted and reasserted that a University for Irish Catholics must, from the very nature of the Catholic Faith, be ever in a state of intellectual bondage, hampered and hindered in its search after truth. And so I think the most fitting reply in this place to the general charge that Faith must conflict with reason, and that Catholic Church authority must repress all liberty of thought, is to be found in the experience of those who, like yourselves, have lived and worked in this National University, which is the heir to all the hopes and aims and principles and temper of the old Catholic University of Ireland. Is it your experience that a sincere and earnest assent to all the doctrines of the Faith is a hindrance to any of the studies for which you have entered the University? Is your belief in a spiritual and immortal soul an obstacle to first-class work in your School of Medicine? Does the dogma of Papal Infallibility overshadow your study of history? Do the doctrines of the Real Presence and of Transubstantiation embarrass you, when busied in the laboratory with chemistry or physics? Or is it the case that the effect of firm religious beliefs upon the Catholic mind so dulls its edge and weakens its powers that it cannot keep pace in the intellectual advance with atheism and Protestantism? That the professors in this Catholic Institution are hampered in their teaching, or its students hindered in their studies, by the interference of Church authority, or the dread of any such interference?

And we might confirm, if we would, your testimony by an account of all that the Church has done for human learning, and by the long list of famous men who have been at the same time childlike believers in every doctrine of the Catholic Faith and leaders in every

branch of human science. But there is no need; and we turn to the main question which is to engage our attention: Is there in reality any conflict between reason and Faith?

By Faith we understand our firm intellectual assent to the whole body of revealed doctrines, on the authority of God revealing them; and by reason the inborn natural faculty which apprehends truth and adheres to it, or, rather, the natural exercise of that faculty in apprehending and adhering to the truth. To ask, then, is there, can there be, a conflict between reason and Faith, is to ask can any of the truths which man's natural intelligence lays hold upon with certainty, which are in fact what his mind represents them to be, contradict the doctrines, or any of the doctrines, which he holds of Divine Faith? So stated, the question answers itself. Truth cannot contradict truth; the truth as perceived by natural reason cannot contradict the truth as revealed by God. Of course, there may at times be an appearance of contradiction. There are wide tracts of knowledge, in which both human science and Divine revelation are concerned. The origin of man; the freedom of his will; the existence and immortality of his soul; the essential concept of nature, personality, substance; the history of the Jewish people and of Christ Our Lord; the authenticity and historical value of the Old and New Testaments; the action of Pope Honorius in the Monothelite controversy; the case of Galileo and the Roman Inquisition; the source of civil authority; the morality of suicide; the indissolubility of the marriage contract: these and countless similar matters are at once within the province of reason and that of Faith. There can be no opposition, it is clear, between the findings of reason and the doctrines of Faith, when reason makes no mistake in its search for

truth, and the doctrines of Faith are rightly understood. But reason may err, and does err often; and doctrines may be held by individuals to be revealed, which are not contained in the Divine Deposit. It is not so long since it was proclaimed by many that geological discoveries had disproved the narrative of creation set forth in Genesis. Within the lifetime of our own generation it was widely asserted that the investigations of Mr. Darwin had achieved the same result. A little while ago we were stirred for a moment by the announcement that living matter had been produced by chemical process. We were told that the condemnation of Galileo refuted the theory of Papal Infallibility; that determinism had set aside the doctrine of free will; that modern research on the ultimate constitution of matter overthrows the belief in Transubstantiation, in the Blessed Sacrament, and in the Sacrifice of the Mass.

In these, and in similar cases, if we could credit the enemies of revealed religion, the conclusions of science are in plain contradiction with the teachings of Faith: a man must make his choice between them; and, since he may not abdicate the use of reason or repudiate the certainty which reason offers him, he must give up the religious doctrines which he had held, and either accept some more rational form of belief, or embrace agnosticism. And you may meet with Christian apologists who endeavour to explain away the contradiction, by setting Faith and reason in different planes of thought: they never intersect, never come into contact; no contradiction can arise between them. Or, they endow man with a dual personality: he is a scientific inquirer, and he is a simple-minded believer. His intellectual life is a double one, without any interference of one life with the other. What he holds as a doctrine of his Faith he may and often must reject as scientifically untrue. And yet there

is no real contradiction—as little, indeed, as between the "Pure Reason" and the "Practical Reason" of Kant; from whose theory both these explanations are derived.

We, too, hold that there can be no contradiction between Faith and reason: but on very different grounds. Already at the beginning of the sixteenth century, the Fifth Council of Lateran defined that, "since truth cannot contradict truth, every statement contrary to a truth of enlightened Faith must be wholly false".[1] And, in our own day, Pius IX wrote, of a school of German philosophers, that they "never cease to extol the power and excellence of human reason and to set it up against the Faith of Christ".[2] "Nothing can be conceived more foolish," the Pope adds, "nothing more impious, nothing more opposed to reason itself. For, although Faith be above reason, no real dissension, no disagreement, can be ever found between them: since both proceed from one and the same source of eternal unchanging truth, God most great and most good." The Council of the Vatican, in the "Constitution on Catholic Faith," after repeating the words of Pope Pius, that "there can be no real disaccord between Faith and reason," goes on to explain why it must be so. "It is the same God," we read, "Who reveals mysteries and bestows Faith, that imparts the light of reason to the human soul; and God cannot ever contradict Himself, or truth ever contradict truth." And it continues: "An unreal semblance of such contradiction arises mainly from not understanding and setting forth the doctrines of Faith according to the mind of the Church, or from taking mistaken opinions to be dictates of reason".[3] It is, therefore, the authoritative teaching of the Church that there can

[1] Denz., 738. [2] *Ibid.*, 1635. [3] *Ibid.*, 1797.

be no contradiction between Faith and reason, and that seeming contradiction, when it appears to exist, can come only from an inaccurate knowledge of revealed truth or from some error of the faculty of reason.

Take, for instance, the case of Galileo in the seventeenth century, which the less well-informed Protestant controversialist was accustomed to make much of as an argument against the infallibility of the Pope. I put the bare central facts of the case: Galileo taught the Copernican theory, which we all admit to-day, that the earth not only revolves on its own axis once in every twenty-four hours, but also moves round the sun once in every year. The theory ran counter to the received opinions of the time; it was thought by many to stand condemned by the plain language of Holy Scripture, which speaks of the rising and going down of the sun, which tells us how the sun "stood still" in the heavens at the command of Josue,[1] and which again and again represents God as "laying the foundations of the earth".[2] The controversy was taken over by the Holy See; the Congregation of the Index, with the Pope as its president, declared Galileo's doctrine to be false, opposed to the teaching of Scripture, not to be tolerated among Catholics: and they exacted from him a retractation of his view. We omit the details of the story, and the fables which have gathered round it. We are concerned here with one thing only: the Roman Index, presided over by the Pope, condemned the Copernican theory as false and repugnant to revelation; and the Roman Index was wrong. The Copernican theory has triumphed: there is no one to call its truth in question to-day. But was there any conflict between Faith and reason? Was Divine Faith, was Church infallibility,

[1] Josue x. 13.
[2] Job xxxviii. 4; Ps. 104-5; Is. li. 13, etc.

involved in the controversy? Undoubtedly the Roman Index believed they were: I have no doubt the Pope himself shared the belief. But the Roman Index is not an infallible tribunal: Papal infallibility is a personal privilege, which the Pope has no power to communicate: he cannot even himself bring it into operation, while he acts only as president or chairman of a Roman Congregation. In Rome itself the decision was never looked on as final and irrevocable; it was never held to be an infallible interpretation of the Scriptures; no one dreamed of maintaining that it was to be assented to by an act of Divine Faith. Some theologians, some Cardinals, the Pope himself as head of a Congregation, were mistaken in the meaning which they assigned to passages of Holy Scripture; but there was no error in the Scriptures themselves; there was no exercise, and so no error, of Church infallibility; there was no conflict of Faith and reason.

Take again the controversies aroused by Darwinism some fifty years ago. As popularly interpreted, and as it bore upon revealed religion, Darwinism, or more generally, the theory of evolution, was supposed to have demonstrated two things; that man is descended from some kind of simian anthropoid ancestor, and that the existence of the universe postulates no creative act on the part of God. It was no matter that Mr. Darwin himself had abstained from all discussion on the origin of the universe and the mental faculties in man. Popular scientists insisted that his observations and experiments, and the inferences he drew from them, had proved both points conclusively; that educated persons had no choice but to accept them; and that the teaching of the Bible and the definitions of the Church were in flagrant opposition to the ascertained and certain results of science. And there were Catholics who were intimidated by the

confident tone of irreligious writers, and who really feared that a great and most dangerous crisis was approaching in the world of religious thought. The crisis, if there were ever one, has long since passed. Darwinism, as Mr. Darwin himself understood it, and as it was put forward by his earlier disciples, is almost as much out of fashion as the older theories of Lamarck or of Lord Monboddo. No one thinks now that there was any real conflict, fifty years ago, between Faith and reason: the Darwinists were too hurried in their construction of a theory; they drew inferences from facts, for which the facts gave no warrant; science, not true science, but a popular imitation of it, was hopelessly in error.

Now, if there can be no conflict between Faith and reason, if revealed truth can never stand in opposition to any certain truth which the human intellect may discover, it becomes easy to determine what our attitude of mind should be, where conflict or opposition would seem to have arisen. We have to find out in the first place and find out for certain, what the revealed truth is. It may be plain on the surface of Holy Scripture; it may be clearly expressed in the tradition of the Church; it may be set out for us in her solemn definitions. But, however it comes to us, we assent to it firmly, on the authority of God; and we know that nothing can be true which really contradicts it. We may, indeed, examine a conflicting theory or statement; we may be curious to discover the flaw in it, and the source of error, or we may suspect that the truth has been misunderstood, or that it has been misrepresented. But we can be in no doubt that, so far as it contradicts God's truth, it is false and foolish. I know, without further inquiry, that every physical and philosophical theory on the ultimate constitution of matter, or on the nature of substance and accident, must be false, which cannot be reconciled with the

dogmas of Transubstantiation and of the Real Presence. I know at once that every theory must be false, which would explain human life and volition by the action of mere mechanical and chemical forces. I know that every reading of history is false, which would show that a Pope or Œcumenical Council had erred in a solemn definition of Faith. And I know, generally, that nothing can be true which is at variance with the revealed Word of God.

Furthermore, I can learn with an infallible certainty what is at variance with that revealed Word. God has made a revelation to me, and has given me at the same time an unerring guide, who can point out to me all the heads of doctrine which the revelation contains, their meaning, and the necessary inferences that may be drawn from them. The infallibility of the Church, as of a living ever-present teacher, is the complement—the natural and gracious, though not essential, complement—of a Divine revelation.

Now, assuming that all revealed Doctrines are infallibly true, and that the Church teaches infallibly what these doctrines are, and that whatever reason seems to urge against them, however plausible or even convincing it may appear to be, is surely mistaken and erroneous; what are we to say of the limitations which Faith sets to the exercise of reason, of the absolute control which it claims in the domain of human thought? Is it not an intolerable burden for us Catholics that we must keep before our eyes the doctrines of revelation and the teachings of the Church in all our intellectual labours; that we must submit the results of our most earnest and most conscientious investigations to the arbitrament of those doctrines and teachings; and that we must accept their judgment, should our opinions be in opposition to them, not merely with external respect and submission, but even with internal and sincere assent?

How entirely fitting it is that reason should thus pay homage to Faith, we have already seen: infallible truth may properly be adopted as the supreme standard of all knowledge. But it is not fitting only, it is vitally important that reason should be guided by infallible authority in moral and religious inquiries, and in the study of questions bearing upon morals and religion. I do not mean that right reason may not, or, in particular cases, does not, of itself attain to truth in matters of such high moment. But I am considering it as we see it at work in the world around us, and as we know it from the history of the past. The tendency of intellect, when most active and most highly educated, is not towards truth in religion or purity in morals. In literature, in art, in mechanical invention, in the natural sciences, in everything that makes for the well-being and enjoyment of material and sensuous life, intellect may be trusted to advance, under favouring circumstances. Not so in morals and religion. It was at the height of Roman culture and civilisation that Roman morals were what Martial and Juvenal picture to us in their epigrams and satires, and religion what Cicero describes in his works on Divination and on the Nature of the Gods. It was at the period of her greatest intellectual development that the choicest society of Greece was what Aristophanes puts before us in his plays. It was in the days of the Renaissance in Florence and in Rome, at the Court of Louis XIV in Paris and Versailles, when intellectual gifts were cultivated to the utmost, and every grace and refinement enriched and adorned life: it was then that vice and irreligion appeared to triumph most openly, to be about to vanquish even the morality and the religion of Christ. And, in our own day, if we regard the modern world, and the great centres in it of intellectual life and vigour, we shall find that the

highly cultivated intellect loses hold for the most part upon Christian morality and Christian Faith. Why it should be so, we need not inquire now: why a God-given faculty, such as reason or intelligence, should fail so utterly of its main purpose, as it grows more fitted to achieve it; why it should produce such brilliant results in those things which matter least, and in the things of supreme moment—in its religious and moral theories and judgments—should not only fall short of the fullness of truth, but should prove actively hostile to it. The fact is as we have stated it: the story of civilisation is a record of the solvent power of reason, uncontrolled by Divine Faith, on the truth of natural and revealed religion, and on the natural and Christian law of individual and of public morals. It is all-important, therefore, in the interest of truth, and for the well-being of human society, that human reason, particularly under conditions of high intellectual development and of great material prosperity, should have the guidance of Faith in questions which affect so vitally the most momentous and most lasting issues. Hence the Vatican Council defined—what had, indeed, been ever the teaching of the Schools—that "it is to Divine revelation we owe it that the very truths concerning God and the things of God, which human reason of itself can attain a knowledge of, may, in the present condition of the human race, be known by all, without difficulty, with a firm certitude, and without admixture of error".[1] And hence, too, the wondrous, and yet most obvious, of facts: A little Catholic child, who has been taught the great truths of Faith from the Penny Catechism, knows more about God and the fundamental principles of religion and morality than the scientist and ethical philo-

[1] Denz., 1786.

sopher, who is groping after truth, without help from revelation and Divine Faith.

But it is not only where religion and morals are concerned that Faith is a most precious, indeed a most necessary, guide. Even in less important sciences, when it comes in contact with them, it may render weighty service. It may enable me to test the value of a conclusion at which I have arrived; it may enable me to judge of the process by which I arrive at it; it may even show me the folly of any attempt to reach such a conclusion at all. Many of you will remember a book which caused a considerable sensation some years ago; which described a search for the tomb and body of Our Lord, undertaken through the modern enterprise of this twentieth century, and then went on to pourtray the consternation which fell upon the Christian world, when a rumour went abroad that the mortal remains of the Christ had been discovered at Jerusalem. Let us consider, for a moment, what a Catholic's attitude of mind would be, if such fanciful incidents came to be realised in fact: The Catholic would hold as a dogma of his Faith that Christ was risen from the dead, and that, in His risen body, He is seated at the right hand of the Father in heaven. He would know, with an absolute and immovable certitude, that Christ's place of sepulchre, if discovered at Jerusalem, must be empty of the mortal remains of Christ. He views the preparations for the search, amused by its folly, pitying the waste of time, money, energy, which it involves. He is not interested in the accounts, published from time to time, of its progress, and of the expectations to which it gives rise; for he knows how it must end. And, when the great rumour takes definite shape and is flung out into the world, he is not disquieted; he has neither misgiving nor apprehension; he is as certain as he is of his own

existence that search and searchers have gone wrong. It is not so impossible for the sun, moon, and stars to fall from heaven as it is for the dead body of the Christ to be found at Jerusalem, or anywhere on earth.

And as it would be in these imagined doings of modern sensational enterprise, so should it be in every branch of earthly knowledge, in which Faith is concerned. It must be good to have an infallible test, by which we may judge with certainty the conclusions that we reach; by which we may even tell beforehand the conclusions we must or must not reach, if our conclusions are to be accurate and trustworthy. There are certain problems in mathematics and in physics which we know to be impossible of solution; it is all to our advantage we should know they are impossible; it saves wise men time and labour. In geometrical propositions you are told at the start what results you must arrive at: you are wrong, and your process is defective, if you arrive at any other. Indeed, our studies have lain mainly, since we began to study, in availing ourselves of other men's labours; in directing our own work by the guidance they give us through their books and oral teaching; in verifying the knowledge we seem to have acquired, by comparing it with what more learned persons tell us that it should be. And it is good to have expert guidance in our work; it is good to have first-class manuals and text-books; it is good to have highly learned lecturers and professors. We do not complain that our intelligence is cramped, our reason hampered, our freedom crushed, because, even in a University, the very home of intellectual life and progress, the paths of knowledge are marked out for us, our own scientific labours are guided and controlled, the results we may achieve are proved and tested, by scientific authority. And, if the authority be Divine? Of course, we know that God has not seen

fit to reveal to us much of scientific truth in the Catholic Deposit. It has not many points of contact with merely secular knowledge. Divine revelation is concerned chiefly, almost wholly, with our souls. And so it is only rarely that Faith is called on to control the workings of reason, or to point out the errors into which reason has been led. But we are considering the principle itself: Is it a grievance that human reason, which, from childhood to old age, is ever influenced and governed by the authority of men, should be expected to yield to the authority of God? If it be a privilege, as it is a privilege, to receive aid in our search for truth, from the ablest minds that have sought for it before us, how can it not be a privilege to receive aid from the infinite wisdom and truth of God? And whether He speaks to us in the pages of Holy Scripture, or in the traditional teaching of an infallible Church, or in the solemn definitions of her Popes and Councils, the aid comes equally from Him. If God reveal a truth or truths of history, biology, astronomy, or any human science, and we become fully certain of the revelation, why should we not accept the truth from Him with gratitude? And what interference is there in such a case with our legitimate freedom of thought?

But, indeed, can any rightful meaning be given to the phrase: "freedom of thought," which recurs so frequently in all discussions upon reason and Faith? Is thought, can thought be, free? Have we any right to think, to embrace views and opinions, as we will? Thought in itself, of course, as we have already seen, is never free. Our judgments are formed compulsorily, under the evidence of manifest truth, or they are determined by the action of the will. To speak of freedom of thought, therefore, is to speak of freedom of the will to think and judge as it may choose. But, is the will free, morally free, to determine thought and judgment, as it

may choose? The question answers itself: The will has no more right to compel assent to what is plainly false than it has to enforce false testimony in the use of speech. We have no greater right to think what we know to be false than we have to say it; or than we have to do what we know to be wrong. And, whenever, and in whatever subject-matter, God makes a revelation to us, we know that every opinion and belief opposed to it is and must be mistaken and untrue. We have no rightful freedom, then, to hold a view, in any branch of human knowledge, which God in Divine revelation, by His infallible Church, condemns.

And if it be urged that, even so, Faith restrains freedom, imposes shackles on it, we, of course, admit the charge. All known truth limits freedom; as do all the precepts of the moral law. You are not free to think as you please about the postulates and the conclusions of mathematical science. You are not free to hold what opinions you may prefer on the ascertained facts of history. You are not free to adopt the view of your choice in countless matters of everyday life and practice. Wheresoever truth meets you, and is recognised by you, your freedom is, so far, restricted within narrower bounds: for you may not reject what you know to be true. All education is directed towards lessening liberty of thought: only the wholly ignorant are free to think as they will.

Reason, then, must submit to Faith, and not only in the religious doctrines contained in the Divine Deposit, but in every department of human knowledge, in which there is common subject-matter of Divine revelation and of natural science. And this being so, what, if any, is the proper sphere of reason, uncontrolled by Faith?

First, reason has a wide, indeed limitless, field of

activity in the profane sciences. "I have seen the travail which God has given to the sons of men, to be exercised in it," says the Preacher; "He hath made all things beautiful in their time, and hath delivered the world over to their disputations."[1] It is only rarely, at few points, as we have already observed, that the spheres of Divine revelation and natural knowledge touch one another. And nowhere else does Faith make any claim to control the energy and activity of reason.

But, secondly—and this is the noblest privilege and duty of human reason—it should lead the unbeliever to embrace the Faith. You cannot believe a truth on the authority of God unless and until you know that God exists, and is worthy of belief, and has revealed the truth which you are invited to believe; and you cannot accept these preliminary judgments on God's own authority. If I am to believe firmly a statement on your testimony, I must be assured that you have made it, and that your testimony is deserving of a firm assent; and I cannot find this assurance in any testimony you may offer to yourself. Hence reason must precede Faith; or, as Gregory XVI teaches, in the fifth of the six propositions which Louis Bautain, a Strassburg professor, was asked to subscribe, towards the middle of the last century: "In these various questions (the existence of God, Christian revelation, Resurrection of Christ, etc.), reason precedes Faith, and should lead us to it".[2] Some fifteen years later, and in somewhat more general terms, the same proposition was tendered to another French Catholic philosopher, Augustin Bonnetty, by Pius IX.[3] And, finally, the Vatican Council explained and defined the teaching, when it declared that "not only Faith and reason can never disagree, but they

[1] Eccles. iii. 11. [2] Denz., 1626. [3] *Ibid.*, 1651.

mutually assist each other, since right reason demonstrates the foundations of Faith, and then, illumined by its light, cultivates the science of Divine things, while Faith frees and protects reason from many errors, and bestows much knowledge upon it".[1] Reason, therefore, must prove clearly for us, before we can believe firmly any doctrine of Divine Faith, that God exists, that He is infinitely wise and infinitely truthful, and that He reveals the doctrine to us. All this we have proved already, as concerns the Deposit of Catholic Faith: for we have shown, without any appeal to the Divine testimony, that the historic and risen Christ is God, that His authority, therefore, is Divine, and that He made a revelation to us, which the Catholic Church guards from error and teaches infallibly.

While, however, such is the office of reason, in the case of those who are led to the Faith in adult years, how shall we explain its action in our own case, who are born into the Faith, and can remember no time, when we deliberately doubted the truth of it as a whole, or the truth of any of its doctrines? How can it be said that reason has led us to Faith? That we have been led, on merely rational grounds, to admit God's existence, authority, and revelation? Of course, we must confess that our position has been very different from that of an infidel, or even of a heretic, who does not inherit, but himself acquires, the Faith; and the rôle of human reason, uncontrolled by Divine authority, is less conscious in us, and therefore more obscure. But even in our own case, there can be no doubt that the process which led to our first act of Divine Faith, was essentially the same as that of the infidel or the heretic. Even as children, we did not first believe that God was, and

[1] Denz., 1799.

spoke to us, and that His testimony was true, because He Himself so testified. We believed it, because parents, relatives, companions, friends, school teachers, our priests, the Church as a great world-wide institution—because all these, or some of them, bore witness to us that it was so; and, on this purely human evidence—abundantly sufficient for us children—we conceived the judgments preliminary to Faith; and then our act of Divine Faith itself.

In every case, therefore, the believer is first guided in the act of Faith by reason acting independently of Faith; and, in so far, the Protestant objection that we Catholics, in our analysis of Faith, are driven back ultimately upon private judgment, and not upon the authority of an infallible Church, is not an objection at all. It is, rather, a defined and admitted doctrine amongst us. Reason and private judgment lead us to the threshold of the Faith; thenceforward reason and private judgment give place to authority.

We have seen, then, that Faith and right reason can never contradict each other: for no truth can ever be opposed to the infallible testimony of God. We have seen that every doctrine is, at once and without further investigation, to be held untrue, which clashes with any portion of the Divine Deposit. That, in the domain of religion and of morals, it is vitally important Faith should control reason, in order to maintain a proper standard of even natural virtue. That, at all the points of contact between revelation and mere human knowledge, Faith's guidance is supremely useful to human reason. And that a vast field remains in which reason can exercise its power, and its activity, independently of Faith; particularly in preparing the mind of the unbeliever for the acceptance of revelation, and in guiding him to its threshold.

LECTURE XIII.

DEVELOPMENTS IN FAITH.

IN a treatise which he entitled the "Commonitorium," St. Vincent of Lerins proposes, as a Rule of Faith, "What has been believed everywhere, always, and by all". If a doctrine have been held as of Faith, throughout the Universal Church, at all times, and by all Catholics, we may feel quite assured that it is a Divinely revealed doctrine, and contained in the Catholic Deposit. The exact interpretation of the Rule has been matter of controversy, though the Rule itself has never been called in question. Of course, it is clear, on Catholic principles, admitting the existence of a Catholic Church, that a doctrine which all the members of that Church, in every part of the Church, hold to be of Divine Faith, and which they have always so held, must of necessity be so; else the Church is not infallible. Nor indeed can it be necessary to verify all three clauses of the Vincentian Rule, before we pronounce a doctrine to be a Divinely revealed dogma. If a doctrine be at any time believed by the whole Catholic Church to be a doctrine of Divine Faith, it is, of course, believed everywhere; nor is there any need to investigate past Church history: the Church is infallible at each and every moment of her existence, not merely in the outcome of her continuous teaching. As a positive standard of Faith, therefore, the Rule of St. Vincent is more than abundantly sufficient. But if

a doctrine fail to fulfil any or all of its conditions? If a doctrine be not held as of Faith in the whole Church by all the Faithful, if it have not been so held in the past, will the Vincentian Rule exclude that doctrine from the Deposit of Faith? Will it prove that it is not a revealed doctrine?

The question, as you see, is twofold: Can a revealed doctrine be held, as of Faith, by a portion of the Church, without being so held by the whole? And, can a doctrine be now held by the whole Church to be of Faith, which, at some previous period of the Church's history, was not so held, was not even put forward explicitly in the Church's teaching? Of these two forms which the question takes, the former has not been made the subject of much discussion, and can be treated of sufficiently while dealing with the latter. Round this latter much controversy has gathered.

We are charged by Protestants with holding, as of Divine Faith and binding upon all Catholics, doctrines which were unknown to the early Church. They bid us search the writings of the New Testament, the works of the Fathers, the Acts of Councils, the whole history of the primitive Church; and they ask: Where do you find such dogmas as the Immaculate Conception or the Supremacy and Infallibility of the Popes? And they remind us that, in the words of our own Creed, our Faith must be Apostolic, must be that body of doctrines, and that only, which was committed to the Apostles, and was delivered by them to the primitive Church. An addition to it may, indeed, be true; may be approved of by the Church, as in harmony with revelation and of benefit to the Faithful; but no addition can be made to the original Deposit, no addition can ever become an Article of the Catholic Faith. We are placed, therefore, they say, in a dilemma: we must admit either

that doctrines solemnly defined as of Faith are not matters of Catholic Faith at all, or that the Faith of the Catholic Church to-day is not the Apostolic Faith, the Faith of the Catholic Church in the early centuries.

Now, we might answer generally—and the answer is an obvious one—that the same charge lies against the early Church itself, at various periods of its history. It could have been urged against the Fathers of Nicæa, in 325, when they inserted the "homoousion" in their Creed, and determined that converts from Novatianism should not be re-baptised; against the Council of Carthage, in 418, when it decreed that infants are to be baptised for the remission of sin; against the Council of Ephesus, in 431, when it declared the Blessed Virgin Mary to be Mother of God; against the Council of Chalcedon, in 451, which defined two distinct and perfect natures in the one person of Christ; against the Council of Orange, in 529, which condemned Pelagians and Semipelagians; against the Council of Constantinople, in 680, which anathematised the Monothelites, and taught the two wills—the Divine and the human—in Christ, each with its own independent activity and operations. Indeed, most of the great early Councils proclaim doctrines and make them binding on the Universal Church, of which it might be said as reasonably as of the Immaculate Conception and of Papal Supremacy that they were unknown to the earlier centuries. And it was, in fact, so said—by the heretics whom these various Councils condemned. Their plea was ever that the opinions which they held were the genuine teachings of the Gospel, the Catholic tradition from Apostolic times. The conciliar definitions were novelties in their eyes, of which the Church had known nothing in the past.

Nor can we wonder that such a charge might often plausibly be made. Definitions of Faith are drawn up

and promulgated against religious errors, which have sprung up within the Church, and gained adherents, and gravely threaten the interests of souls. Errors of the kind are little likely to arise, and still less likely to find favour among the Faithful, if they run plainly counter to the recognised and accepted teachings of the Faith. As it is in our own times, so it was in those earlier centuries: men put forward no opinions within the Church nor could hope to gain adherents for them, of which it could be truly said: the Church has always, everywhere, maintained the contrary. In one sense or another, something of novelty must attach to every new definition.

But in what sense is a doctrine of Faith, or definition, new? Only in this, that it is taught with a particularity and a clearness now, with which it was never taught before; that it is now to be believed expressly and distinctly, as it never was believed before. In the ordinarily received sense of the word "new," the Church never proposes a new doctrine for the acceptance of the Faithful.

There would seem to be no doubt that, in Old Testament times, there was a progressive revelation to the Jews of wholly new and distinct doctrines. We have only to read God's communications, first to the Patriarchs, and later to the Prophets, in order to see how progressive the revelation was. And, when Our Lord came, He added Himself, and through the Holy Spirit Whom He sent, many fresh truths, of which the earlier dispensation offers no trace or only a very faint one. The Trinity of persons in unity of Divine nature; His own Divinity; His oneness of person in two natures—the human and the Divine; His Church; the Sacramental System; the supernatural excellence of virginity and of poverty; the Gospel law of charity; the judg-

ment to come; the eternal punishment of sin; the blessed vision of God in heaven: these and many other articles of our belief were entirely, or almost entirely, unknown to the Jews in the Old Law. But no new revelation, no new public revelation, has been made, will be ever made, after the revelation made by Christ. Christ, as its Divine Head, will be ever active in the Church; the Holy Ghost will ever pour forth gifts and graces in it; He will bestow His inspirations plentifully on its members; He may even make private revelations to some amongst them: but He will never again reveal a truth to the Church at large, never even reveal to the whole Church the meaning or the consequences of what has been revealed before.

"All things whatsoever I have heard of My Father, I have made known to you," Our Lord says to His Apostles, after the Last Supper;[1] and a little later in the same discourse: "I have yet many things to say to you: but you cannot hear them now. But when He, the Spirit of Truth, is come, He shall guide you into all truth."[2] And, later again, He sends them to "teach all nations . . . teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you; and behold I am with you all days, even to the consummation of the world".[3] Our Lord Himself, therefore, appears to warn the Apostles that, beyond the truths which He has made known to them already and those others which the Holy Ghost shall guide them into, there is to be no further revelation to the Church. They are to preach that whole body of truths to all the nations; and He will be with them and their successors in the preaching of it, until the consummation of the world. The Divine commission and the promise of Divine assistance em-

[1] John xv. 15. [2] xvi. 12. [3] Matt. xxviii. 19.

brace all the truths revealed to the Apostles—those, and those alone. Nor did the Apostles themselves take any other view of Christ's intention and of their own calling. The main purpose of St. Paul, in his Epistle to the Hebrews, is to contrast the Jewish dispensation with that other which Christ had come to establish; to show how the former was only a shadow and a figure of the reality embodied in the latter; to persuade the Jews that only one more complete or perfect dispensation was to come: the beatific vision. Hence, too, the time of Christ's coming is "the fullness of time";[1] it is in "the last days" that the "Spirit of the Lord is poured out upon all flesh".[2] In this sense also the Faithful "are built upon the foundation of the Apostles and Prophets";[3] and in this sense St. Paul beseeches Timothy to "keep that which is committed to thy trust"[4] and to "hold the form of sound words which thou hast heard of me in Faith . . . to keep the good thing committed to thy trust by the Holy Ghost, Who dwelleth in us".[5] For this reason, too, St. Jude, in his Catholic Epistle, declares himself "constrained to write unto you, beseeching you to contend earnestly for the Faith, which was once for all delivered to the saints".[6] And for this St. Paul commands Timothy: "The things which thou hast heard of me by many witnesses, the same commend to faithful men, who shall be fit to teach others also".[7] In all the New Testament, in the teaching of Our Lord, and in the preaching of His Apostles, there is no promise of any further revelation; there is no hint that any such revelation is to be looked for; it is implied throughout, if not expressly stated, that no such revelation will be given. And hence the constantly re-

[1] Gal. iv. 4. [2] Acts ii. 17. [3] Eph. ii. 20. [4] 1 Tim. vi. 20.
[5] 2 Tim. i. 13. [6] Jude 3. [7] 2 Tim. ii. 2.

curring principle, put forward by the Fathers of the early Church, that nothing is to be believed "beyond what has been handed down". "This I would urge first of all," Tertullian writes, "that Christ Himself established one thing, and that with certainty, which all nations are to believe absolutely. . . . This is to be sought, until you find it; when found, believe it: and then do nothing further than hold what you have believed. This only believe besides, that nothing else is to be believed, nor, therefore, to be searched for; since you have found and have believed what He established who hath not ordered you to search for aught save what He Himself established."[1] When St. Augustine appeals to the earlier Bishops, guardians, and teachers of the Faith, against the Pelagians, he justifies his appeal on the ground that "what they found in the Church, that they held; what they had learned, that they taught; what they had received from their fathers, that they delivered to their children".[2] And Vincent of Lerins, whom we have already quoted, writes more plainly still. "I never can be sufficiently amazed," he says, "at the so great fancy which some men have for falling into error. Not content with the Rule of Faith, delivered once for all and long since accepted, they search day after day for novelties, delighted always to add something to our religion, to change something, to take something from it: as though it were not a dogma from heaven that what was once for all revealed suffices."[3]

And so, whenever revealed doctrines were called in question, or heretical opinions were set up against them, and the Church judged fitting to examine and decide such controversies, her method has been ever to consult

[1] Præscript., c. 9; M.L. ii. 23.
[2] Contra Jul., ii. 34; M.L. xlvi. 698.
[3] Commonit., xxi.; M.L. l. 666.

tradition: What is the testimony of the Scriptures? What the mind and teaching of the Church in earlier times? No need to quote instances. One has only to look into the Acts of the Councils, from Nicæa to the Vatican, and he will find that neither in the determining of doctrines, nor in her explanation of them, has the Church had recourse to private revelation, or human reasonings, or any special inspiration, but solely to the revelation which was made by Christ and His Holy Spirit to the Apostles, and which was preserved and handed on by the Bishops, the Divinely appointed guardians and teachers of the Deposit. And, therefore, Pius IX condemned the fifth proposition of the Syllabus: "Divine revelation is imperfect, and consequently subject to continuous and indefinite progress, corresponding to the progress of human reason".[1] And the Vatican Council declared that "the doctrine of Faith, which God revealed, has not been given over to be perfected by human intelligence, as though it were a philosophical theory; but it has been delivered to (the Church) the Spouse of Christ, as a Divine Deposit, to be guarded faithfully and to be declared infallibly".[2] And, only a few years ago, Pius X, in his condemnation of Modernist errors, enumerates this amongst them, that "the dogmas of religion may and must change".[3] But this theory of the Modernists is based upon principles so utterly subversive of belief in the Christian revelation that we need not further refer to it here.

We are to take it, then, as a certain doctrine of our Faith, that no new public revelation is ever made to the Church; that none has been ever made, since the last of the Apostles died. No truth, therefore, to be believed as of Catholic Faith, but must have been made known

[1] Denz., n. 1705. [2] *Ibid.*, 1800. [3] *Ibid.*, 2080.

by Christ or the Holy Spirit to the Apostles, received from them by the Apostolic Church, and handed on from generation to generation, until it reached ourselves. And, if this be so, how, it is asked, can we maintain that doctrines such as Transubstantiation, the Immaculate Conception, and Papal Supremacy, are really to be believed and professed as of Catholic Faith, when we look for them in vain in the primitive Church?

A quite sufficient answer is to be found in the dogma of Church Infallibility, which lies at the very foundation of all our Catholic beliefs. The teaching Church is infallible in declaring the content of the Divine Deposit; she is infallible in interpreting its meaning; she is infallible in determining the existence and the nature of the tradition by which it is handed on. When the Vatican Council defined Papal Supremacy, and defined it irrevocably because infallibly, it defined at the same time, with a like infallibility, what Papal Supremacy involved, and that the dogma is contained in Holy Scripture and in the perpetual tradition of the Church. And thus we are assured, indirectly and on general grounds, in this, as in all similar cases, that the defined dogma was delivered to the Apostles, and that tradition, written or oral or both, has preserved and transmitted it.

But, while such an answer is, as we have said, sufficient, and can be applied to every doctrine which the Church defines, we may proceed further and inquire into the principle which underlies the action of the Church in formulating such definitions. That principle is the principle of Development. Not in the extended sense which the word bears in Cardinal Newman's well-known "Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine," where there is question not merely of definitions of Faith, or even of all infallible Church teachings, but of

views, opinions, beliefs—such as he instances in "The Monastic Rule"—which grow out of explicitly revealed truths, and are in keeping with them, yet are not themselves revealed. At present I speak only of the principle or theory of Development, as it regards such of the doctrines in which it issues as are subject-matter of Divine Faith, and must, therefore, have been themselves revealed in some form or other.

I observe, then, what is plain on the face of the Gospels, and in the oral teaching and writings of the Apostles, that although a great deal of the Christian revelation is easily to be understood by even the simplest and least learned, there is much in it also which is obscure and complex. In his second Epistle, St. Peter, speaking of "our most dear brother Paul," and referring to all his Letters, declares that in them "are certain things hard to be understood, which the unlearned and unstable wrest, as they do also the other Scriptures, to their own destruction".[1] Of Our Lord Himself it is said: "Without parable He did not speak to them: but apart He explained all things to His disciples".[2] And when "His disciples came and said to Him: Why speakest Thou to them in parables? He answered and said to them. . . . Therefore do I speak to them in parables, because seeing they see not, and hearing they hear not, neither do they understand."[3] Nor do we require any such express testimony of the Holy Scriptures themselves to their own obscurity. One has only to read Our Lord's discourses, His parables, His prophecies, or the Epistles of St. Paul and of the other Apostles, or St. John's Apocalypse, in order to realise how difficult, how impossible, it is to grasp at once the full meaning of many passages in the New Testament.

[1] 2 Pet. iii. 15. [2] Mark iv. 34. [3] Matt. xiii. 10.

The very existence of controversies in the Church, and not with heretics only, but among devout and learned Catholics, is confirmation of the difficulty. Nor will anyone be found to assert, even in our own day, after all that commentators have discussed, and Church Fathers have explained, and Councils have defined, and the ordinary Magisterium has taught, that we have now fathomed the depths of Christ's and the Apostles' teaching, that we already understand clearly and distinctly all the doctrines which they intended to convey, and which are, in fact, contained in the language they employed. It is not to be expected that we should. Our knowledge of God's visible creation is singularly limited. We observe and co-ordinate some facts: we rarely penetrate far beyond the facts themselves; it is only rarely, if ever, we can satisfactorily explain them. And if God wills graciously to reveal to us higher things concerning the Divine nature, the mysteries of grace, His supernatural providence for men: what wonder that His revelation should be more pregnant of meaning than any man, or any generation of men, can fully comprehend? No doubt He might so communicate with us, if He chose, that no uncertainty of any kind could attach to His communications. And He has at times done so, both in the Old and the New Testaments. But not always; nor have we any right to claim He should, or any ground to expect it.

Whether, then, we examine Our Lord's own teaching, or the inspired teaching of the Apostles, we are prepared to find a good deal, of which we do not see at once the full significance. We may see no meaning whatsoever in the language which they use, as so frequently in St. John's Apocalypse. We may see a meaning, while yet uncertain of its truth. There may be hidden meanings beyond any we perceive. We may be blind to much that

is contained in the doctrines we see and understand. And what occurs to us may happen to the Church Universal.

I would not be taken to imply that the Faith of the Apostles was subject to these limitations. Our Lord, as we have seen, assures them that: "All things whatsoever I have heard of My Father I have made known to you"; and He promises them: "When He, the spirit of truth, shall come, He shall guide you into all truth"; and, though "without parables He did not speak to them (the Jews), privately He explained all things to His own disciples". It seems likely, therefore, that the Apostles understood expressly and in detail the whole revelation entrusted to them: nothing in it but was distinctly before their minds, as they delivered the Divine message. But, however it may have been in their case, it is certain that the earliest generations of Christians were not possessed of all this clear and explicit knowledge. That of the Apostles had been miraculous, the outcome of Christ's own immediate teaching, and inspired by the Holy Ghost. The first generation of Christians received also inspired teaching; but they themselves were not inspired in receiving it. They received it as we receive it: we have the same supernatural graces offered to us; we have the same body of revealed doctrines set out for us; we have the advantage of more than eighteen centuries of Christian thought and meditation on them. Is it any wonder we should have a better understanding of the contents of the Divine Deposit than the Christians of the early centuries? Is it strange that there should have been not a little in that deposit to which they did not penetrate; which they held, indeed, because involved in some great truth of which they were keenly conscious, but which they did not realise or express distinctly by itself? We may feel assured, then, that there were treasures of truth in the

revelation delivered by the Apostles, which were only to be realised in the consciousness of the Faithful, as generation succeeded generation; as men studied the inspired writings and oral traditions, and compared the results of their labours; as controversies arose and were carried forward and determined; as heresies sprang up and were condemned.

And the process by which a latent truth, embedded in, or rather part of another, which the Church teaches and the Faithful hold explicitly, has come to be known as "Development of dogma": a development which imitates in a measure the evolution of living things, and yet is widely differentiated from it. For Divine revelation is not a dead form of words, to be worshipped in the mere letter: it is an assemblage of great truths, applicable to all the varying conditions of human life, opposed to a vast variety of religious and moral errors, inexhaustible subject-matter for the consideration of the ablest and most many-sided minds. Like all great ideas, which make appeal at the same time to man's intelligence, his emotions and his interests, it lives and grows. Yet, it must grow from within: different in this from other living growths, which we observe in ourselves and in the world around us. It cannot draw from outside itself, even though it should perfect what it draws, and transmute it, in the process. Revelation, dogma, in its most developed state, is the same revelation which was preached by the Apostles to the first Christians, which was taught and explained by the early Fathers, which was studied and discussed by the schoolmen and apologists, which was believed, in every age, by the simple Faithful; but which is now better understood, more clearly distinguished into its component parts, more evidently opposed to the errors which it condemns.

And, if you should ask how such developments occur, a reply may be made most readily by taking one or other concrete example. Consider, for instance, the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception, which is now, has been since 1854, when Pius IX defined it, an article of Catholic Faith. In Holy Scripture, in the oral teaching of the Apostles, so far as any record of it has come down to us, there is nowhere any express mention that Our Lady was conceived without original sin. We do not find it explicitly set out in the writings of the early Fathers, or in the decrees of any Councils of the Church. As far as we know, it was not brought forward by the Bishops when instructing the Faithful; the article of belief, as we understand it, was not only not distinctly assented to: it was not even distinctly thought of by the Faithful themselves. On the other hand, the Church—pastors and people—had no doubt that at the very dawn of revelation Our Lady was referred to as victorious over sin: "I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and thy seed and her seed; she (it) shall crush thy head, and thou shalt lie in wait for her (his) heel".[1] In this first of the Messianic Prophecies, the protoevangelium as it has been called, before Adam was driven from paradise, God Himself joins Mary and her Divine Son in a common enmity to Satan. I do not argue—it is not necessary for my purpose I should argue—that the text cannot be understood of Eve. But she had just been tempted, had just sinned. It is not easy to understand how there could be enmity between her and Satan, as between her seed (Jesus Christ) and Satan's seed. The prophecy is far more naturally understood of Mary; and in fact it was so understood by the early Church. We are still a long way from a belief in the

[1] Gen. iii. 15.

Immaculate Conception; but already a quite exceptional position is assigned to the Blessed Virgin in man's battle with Satan and with sin. "Hail full of grace, the Lord is with thee; blessed art thou among women,"[1] are the words of the Divine messenger to Mary herself, confirmed by her cousin Elizabeth, who "was filled with the Holy Ghost, and cried out with a loud voice and said: 'Blessed art thou among women'."[2] Mary is now revealed to us as "full of grace," as "blessed among," or, rather—in the true meaning of the Hebrew phrase—"before, women": a place is assigned her apart, in the Divine favour; she is blessed above all others; she is endowed with a singular fullness of grace. Here, again, there is no express mention of a sinless conception; no express statement that the first instant of her life had been sanctified by the Holy Ghost. Nor do I think it can be reasonably maintained that the Faithful of the primitive Church, when they heard the first chapter of St. Luke's Gospel read in their religious assemblies, had an idea even of the Virgin's wondrous privilege, in which we now believe explicitly as an article of Faith. But, while this is or may be so, the question still remains, the one question with which we are here concerned: Is the Immaculate Conception of the Virgin Mary foretold in the words God spoke in Paradise? Is it declared in the words of the Angel and of St. Elizabeth? Who shall explain the full meaning of the prophecy? Who shall tell us all that is contained in that "fullness of grace" and "blessed beyond all women," of which St. Elizabeth and the angel speak? The Church, as we have seen, is the guardian and infallible interpreter of Divine revelation. It is for her not merely to preserve the Deposit, but also to inform us authoritatively, as opportunity

[1] Luke i. 28. [2] i. 41.

offers and need arises, of what doctrines are comprised in it. In this case, she has done so. The Blessed Virgin Mary is commemorated as Christ's Mother in all the earliest Symbols or Professions of Faith. We have only few and very imperfect records of the first centuries; but as soon as persecution ceased, and the pastors of the Church were free to preach and write, we see at once the very exalted place which the Blessed Virgin had already won in the thoughts and veneration of the Faithful. I do not quote the definition of the Divine maternity by the Council of Ephesus; for the mind of the Fathers at Ephesus was not so much to proclaim the dignity of Mary as to demonstrate that, since she was the Mother of God, there could be one only person in Christ. But, both before and after Ephesus, they are frequent in their references to her, for her own sake; they see in her Divine motherhood the source of all her privileges; and among those privileges they dwell especially on her freedom from all sin. "As the first man was formed from the immaculate earth," says the Epistle on the martyrdom of St. Andrew, "so it was necessary that the perfect man, the Son of God, should be born of an immaculate virgin."[1] Saints Justin, Irenæus, Cyril of Jerusalem, Epiphanius, and many others compare her to Eve, before Eve sinned. "Thou, indeed, and Thy Mother," St. Ephraem addresses Christ, "are the only ones who are wholly beautiful; for in Thee, O Lord, there is no stain, nor in Thy Mother any blemish."[2] "Instead of the Virgin Eve, who became for us an instrument of death," says St. Theodotus of Ancyra, "God chose, to give us life, a Virgin most pleasing to Himself and full of grace, who, though a woman, was far removed from woman's

[1] M.L. ii. 1226. [2] Carm. Nisib., ed. Bicknell, p. 122.

sin: a virgin, innocent, immaculate, holy in mind and body, brought forth as a lily among thorns, who knows not the wickedness of Eve . . . a daughter of Adam, but most unlike him."[1] And, to omit all others, St. Augustine insists, in his controversies with the Pelagians, that all have sinned, "except the holy Virgin Mary, of whom, for the honour of the Lord, I will have no question whatever, where sin is concerned".[2] I would not imply that none of the early Fathers attribute any fault or imperfection to the Blessed Virgin. Origen, Basil, Chrysostom certainly do: but they stand almost alone; they speak of actual, passing imperfections, not of original sin; and the great body of the Fathers—a practical consensus—is in clear and emphatic opposition to them. To the Fathers generally Mary is: "immaculate," "immaculate of the immaculate," "unstained," "without spot," "free from every stain of sin," "most holy," "most pure," "most pleasing to God," "innocence itself," "incorrupt purity," "worthy of God," "exceeding beyond compare even the angelic virtues in purity and sanctity of soul and body". And an almost endless list might be compiled of similar epithets, which Fathers both of East and West pour out upon her. So that, as it has been well said, had they wished to teach explicitly the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception, they could not have chosen language, short of the phraseology we ourselves now use, more suited to express the dogma. They seem never to have put to themselves, in formal terms, the question of her soul's condition, in the very moment when she was conceived. But no man or body of men could use the language that they do of her, and yet believe that there ever had been an instant when she

[1] M.G. lvii. 1428.
[2] De Nat. et Grat., c. 36; M.L. xxxxiv. 267.

was a slave of sin. And all this teaching on the Virgin's purity and gifts of grace they derive from the proto-evangelium and from the inspired words of the Angel and of St. Elizabeth.

As time passed, and in the long struggle between barbarism and civilisation, when revealed truth and Christian morals were battling for existence, there was little discussion on the prerogatives of Our Lady. The feast of her Conception took its rise in the East towards the end of the seventh or the beginning of the eighth century. We find it in our Martyrology of Tallaght about 790, and in the "Felire" of St. Ængus some ten years later. We hear of it in some Anglo-Saxon monasteries, a little before the Norman Conquest. What at first was the significance of the feast it is not easy to say; but there seems no doubt that in the East it soon became identical with that of the Immaculate Conception, as we celebrate it now. The attempt to introduce it into the West led to much controversy, to a clearer definition of the questions involved, and to a gradually widening and conscious acceptance of the doctrine by the whole Catholic Church. In the twelfth century, and in a celebrated letter to the Canons of Lyons, St. Bernard opposed both the feast itself and the doctrine on which it rested; and his views were supported by not a few holy and learned writers. Others adopted the contrary opinion; chief among them the great Franciscan, our own Duns Scotus, who gave scientific precision to the doctrine, freed it from the main difficulties urged against it, and won over the great centres of theological learning to its acceptance. Little by little belief in the Immaculate Conception, as a revealed truth, gained adherents. The Catholic people had always stood outside the controversy. St. Bernard and those who held with him had only slight acquaintance with the teaching of the

early Fathers, and seem to have known nothing of the feast and its significance in the Eastern, and even in parts of the Western, Church. By slow degrees, as men thought, and read, and weighed arguments and difficulties, as they took part in private discussions, or watched public disputations, the Catholic mind grew clear in the conviction that the doctrine was a Divinely revealed doctrine, and to be believed of Divine Faith. And, throughout, Rome acted with the wisdom and prudence which never fail her, where the Faith is concerned. In 1476, Pope Sixtus IV published a Constitution inviting the Faithful "to give God thanks and praise for the wondrous Conception of the Immaculate Virgin";[1] and seven years later, he forbade any to assert or publish that the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception was false and heretical.[2] In 1567, Pius V condemned the proposition of Baius: "No one except Christ is without original sin".[3] In 1661, Alexander VII issued a Bull, declaring that the feast, now celebrated universally, was in honour of the Virgin's "preservation from the stain of original sin".[4] Meanwhile, the Council of Trent, in its fifth Session, after defining the nature and universality of original sin, had declared that "it was not its intention to comprehend in the decree the Blessed and Immaculate Mary, Mother of God".[5] And so, under the guidance of the Holy Ghost, and the teaching of the Catholic Episcopate, Faith in the Immaculate Conception became universal; all opposition, public and private, within the Church disappeared; and when Pius IX, in 1854, solemnly defined the dogma, he but set the seal of the Church's supreme authority on what was already the explicit belief of all the Faithful.

[1] Denz., 734. [2] *Ibid.*, 735. [3] *Ibid.*, 1073.
[4] *Ibid.*, 1100. [5] *Ibid.*, 792.

There had been no new revelation, no special and miraculous intervention of the Holy Spirit. The primitive revelation had been, as it were, taken to pieces, examined, discussed, controverted; and out of the examination and the controversy its full and true meaning had emerged distinctly.

There is no need to deal with the development of the dogmas of Papal Supremacy and of Papal Infallibility; but we may say of them what we have said of the Immaculate Conception, and what we say of every doctrine of Faith, which, after a period of seeming doubt and hesitation, the Church defines: they are all contained in the original Deposit, delivered to the Church by Christ through the Apostles; and they are separated out, and put expressly forward, by the Church, with infallible assistance from the Holy Ghost, as times and other circumstances may require.

For the Church, like all societies, is a living organisation: and the Deposit of Faith is a living Deposit. Its contents cannot change: it can receive no addition, suffer no diminution. But it can be presented differently to mankind, as mental and social conditions vary. New aspects of the revealed truth will come into prominence, as heresy and other forms of religious error manifest themselves, and call for condemnation. Domestic controversies may lead to a more accurate understanding of all that a revealed doctrine implies. Earnest examination of Scripture and tradition may discover in them truths which had hitherto received little notice. Study of the Fathers, of ecclesiastical antiquity, of profane history, of the natural sciences, may help to determine more clearly the exact meaning of what was at first obscure in portions of revelation.

In these, and perhaps in other ways, developments in dogma have taken place; and the same or similar causes

will lead to further developments as years go on. But there has been, there will be, no change of Faith: the implicit, the latent, is unfolded, becomes manifest; but the Rule of St. Vincent of Lerins holds ever good: We believe of Divine Faith only what has been so believed always, everywhere, and by all believers.

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PRINTED IN GREAT BRITAIN BY THE UNIVERSITY PRESS, ABERDEEN

Date Loaned
